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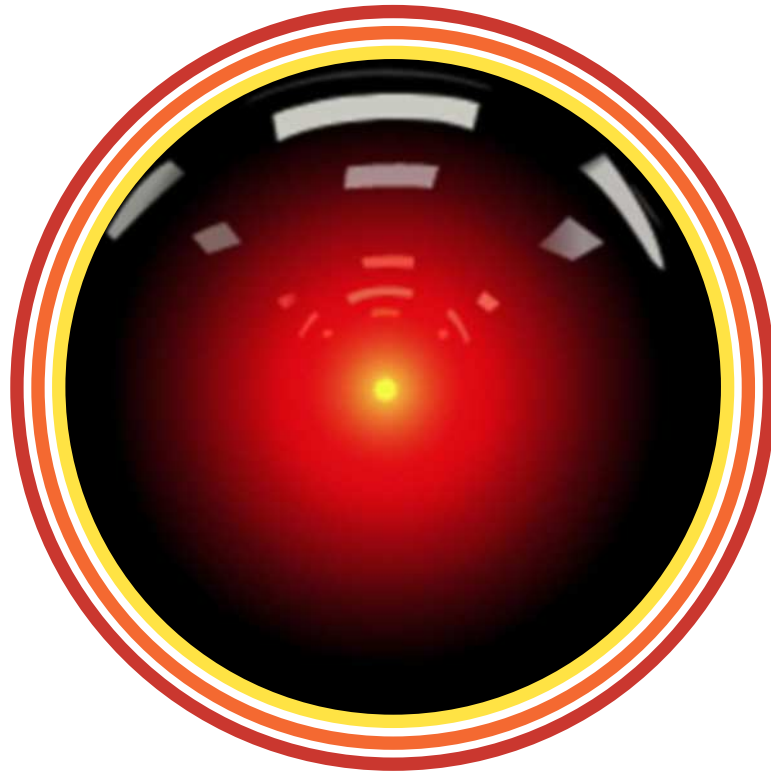


FIRST EDITION

BLAST OFF ON A NOSTALGIA-FUELLED TOUR OF THE STARS

FROM THE MAKERS OF

SFX + **retro**
GAMER



ULTIMATE SCI-FI RETRO COLLECTION

SCIENCE FICTION IS A GENRE THAT PROVIDES SOME OF the most thought-provoking and awe-inspiring stories across the written page, silver screen and television set.

Whether it's the hum of Luke Skywalker's lightsaber, the otherworldly buzz of the Enterprise's transporter or something else entirely, we all have a sci-fi story from our past that elicits a warm nostalgic glow in our hearts. In this special edition from the makers of *SFX* and *Retro Gamer*, join us as we hop into our trusty TARDIS and travel back in time to celebrate the science fiction of yesteryear.

We will journey into our past's vision of the future to deliver you a collection of must-see stories. Travel to a Galaxy Far Far Away and relive the highs of the *Empire Strikes Back*. Step through the uncanny and strange *Twilight Zone*. Experience the Gothic genesis of the genre with Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*. And prepare for a videogame takeover as the *Space Invaders* begin beeping and blooping towards planet earth.

All this and much more await you on your journey. So what are you waiting for? Set phasers to stun, ensure your Sonic Screwdriver is charged and prepare for a hyperspace jump into the past!

「 FUTURE 」

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ESSENTIAL RETRO SCI-FI FILMS

THERE ARE GREAT SCI-FI FILMS AND THEN THERE ARE GENRE-DEFINING SCI-FI FILMS. THESE ARE THE MOVIES EVERY SERIOUS SF CONNOISSEUR MUST SEE

WORDS: DAVE GOLDER

CINEMA WAS MADE FOR SCI-FI. FROM EPIC SPACE BATTLES to giant aliens to vast apocalyptic landscapes, science fiction feeds the big screen's need for spectacle in a way no other genre can.

It is, after all, called the BIG screen, and as Douglas Adams once wrote, "Space is big. Really big. You just won't believe how vastly hugely mind-bogglingly big it is..." And sci-fi filmmakers have been coming up with mind-boggling concepts and visuals to fill that space ever since the birth of cinema: the first sci-fi movie was Georges Méliès' *Le Voyage dans la Lune* in 1902.

Sure, low-budget psychological thrillers and melodramatic weepies can make for great films. But only science fiction truly stretches the boundaries of what cinema can offer audiences, delivering wonders well beyond their everyday experience... and pushing forward film technology at the same time.

Some science fiction films have left more of an indelible stamp on the history of on-screen sci-fi than others. What follows are 11 landmarks in movie science fiction that every serious aficionado needs to cross off their checklist. Fans may argue about the 'best' science fiction films, but these are the most important from cinema's first 100 years.



Arnold's T-800 went from cold killer to paternal hero.

TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY

He did come back

1991

The Terminator or Terminator 2? It's tricky deciding which one most deserves a place on this list. So if you disagree with our choice, consider it a joint entry for both. Some fans prefer the grungy feel of the original, with Arnold Schwarzenegger as a villainous cyborg from the future, travelling back in time to kill the mother of the man who will become a rebellious pain-in-the-side for our robot overlords. But James Cameron's bigger, brasher, flashier sequel is more than just 'more of the same'; it expands on the original concept in so many clever, audience-pleasing ways.

Not least of which is the film's new bad guy. Having turned Arnie's T-800 Terminator into the hero this time, his nemesis is now the unforgettable T-1000 (played by Robert Patrick), a perfect blend of FX and character to produce a literally mercurial, shape-shifting assassin.

This, along with the film's doomy apocalyptic prophecies, the new kick-ass Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton), the ominous threat of the Skynet network and a roller-casting conveyor belt of pulse-pounding action scenes elevate the film to near-mythic status within sci-fi circles. But, "I'll be back," is still a better catchphrase than, "Hasta la vista, baby."



"You can't tell but I'm actually winking right now."



ROBOCOP

Cyborganised crime fighter

1987

Sweary, politically incorrect and very, very bloody, *RoboCop* is a film that's all too easy to dismiss as crass and exploitative. But there's way more to director Paul Verhoeven's potty-mouthed movie than the glorification of gore.

Though, admittedly, there *is* an awful lot of viscera. And undeniably, the image that lives on in most people's minds long after seeing the movie is a henchman with his face hanging off after an argument with a vat of acid, rather than, say, one of the film's clever faux commercials ("Nukem! Another quality home game from Butler Brothers!").

But there is a really engaging human story to *RoboCop*, too. Never before or

since has a film so vividly evoked the trauma of having the majority of your body replaced with machinery – even the remake with its improved special FX overplayed its card in this respect and ended up looking ludicrous. But you genuinely feel for Peter Weller's Murphy – a cop who's shot to pieces and rebuilt by scientists – as he struggles to retain his humanity.

Then there's the awesome ED-209, a stop-motion-animated robot with massive cannons; the satirical newscasts that ridicule big business; the wonderfully slimy corporate big wigs to hiss and boo; and one of the best villain's deaths in cinema history ("You're fired!").

© ALAMY (10); GETTY (1)

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Twisty turny time travel fun

1985

Time travel has been a rich source for comedy sci-fi. But while Bill and Ted took time paradoxes to ludicrous extremes, and *Hot Tub Time Machine* went down the gross-out route, *Back to the Future* remains the pinnacle of cinematic temporal hijinks.

The full complexity of its time-travel shenanigans unwraps throughout the trilogy, but the two sequels, while fun, are not as flawless in the execution – or as consistently funny – as the first film, which is nigh a nigh-on perfect combination of sci-fi and gags.

Michael J Fox is perfectly cast as Marty McFly, even if he was the second choice after Eric Stoltz was fired from the role (sad for him, lucky for us viewers). Marty travels back to 1955 in a DeLorean sports car pimped by friendly, neighbourhood mad professor Dr Emmett Brown (Christopher Lloyd). There he has to

convince his teenage mum and dad to fall in love, which ain't easy when his dad was a grade-A geek at the time.

It's a sheer joy, lean and mean with not a wasted moment or line. Action-packed, hilarious, and a great beginner's guide to time paradoxes. Even if the photo with Marty's family fading away makes absolutely no logical sense at all...

Watching Marty drag 1980s slang into 1955 is great comedy.



PLANET OF THE APES

The future's hairy

1968

Planet of the Apes could have been very silly indeed. Apes on horseback using humans as slaves? It sounds like the recipe for a cheesy B-movie. And it could have been an utter disaster if the ape make-up wasn't convincing.

Thankfully, the ape masks weren't just convincing, they were phenomenal for the time, and still look impressive to this day. They were a triumph for make-up artist John Chambers, the man who also created the pointed ears for *Star Trek's* Mr Spock and who was involved in a CIA operation that formed the basis of the film *Argo* (in which Chambers was played by John Goodman). For the film, he helmed a team that crafted large numbers of chimpanzee, gorilla and orangutan masks, nabbing him an honorary Academy Award for outstanding make-up achievement.

But the success of the film wasn't down to its impressive masks and costumes alone. Even on its release, critics were heaping praise on the film and its reputation has only grown in the years since. Why?

Well, one thing is its utter commitment to making its own central conceit work on-screen. Loosely based on the novel *La Planète des Singes* by Pierre Boulle, it's the story of three astronauts

Heston's star power made *Apes* a serious contender.



who crash land on an unknown planet where apes rule and humans are slaves.

An allegorical tale using sci-fi to make social commentary, *Planet of the Apes* treats the outlandish scenario with deadly seriousness. Casting Charlton Heston in the lead was a clear statement of intent; this was *not* a B-movie. And the brutal, grim tone of the movie, plus the meticulous way ape society is detailed, made the film an instant hit.

The jaw-dropping final twist helped place *Planet of the Apes* on the cinematic map too. No spoilers here, but what a final line: "You blew it up! Ah, damn you! God damn you all to hell!"



Imagine if the CIA used these monkey masks in missions...



"Party on, dudes!"
Wait... sorry, wrong film.

THE MATRIX

Virtual surreality

1999

The Matrix pulled a double whammy to ensure its place in the sci-fi cinematic hall of fame. On the one hand, it was the first major movie to wow audiences with the concept of a virtual reality world. Sure, films like *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995) and *Lawnmower Man* (1992) had dabbled with the concept of a metaverse, but *The Matrix* was the first successful film to properly delve into the existential implications of humans living long term within a virtual reality.

That was mindblowing enough as it was. But then the film also gave us bullet time and changed the look of screen sci-fi action forever.

Bullet time was the revolutionary new shooting process which used circles of cameras capturing images in rapid succession to 'freeze' actors in time, creating a '3D' shot that could be viewed from various angles. It created striking images the like of which audiences had never seen before, and which were immediately imitated by subsequent genre movies.

In fact, the original bullet time tech was superseded by a cheaper, faster CG 'cheat' (which even the *Matrix* sequels used), but the CG version never had the same authentic feel.

However, the influence of the visual grammar of that original bullet time effect can still be detected in the big CGI-action fests of today.

The film wasn't just about the aesthetics, though. The Wachowskis crafted a slick, twisty-turny tale full of memorable sequences, quirky characters and outlandish martial artistry. Keanu Reeves gives a career-best as Thomas Anderson, aka the hacking genius Neo who learns that his world is one big ruse.

It's stylised as hell with some clunky dialogue, but it also gave so much to the zeitgeist: "Blue pill or red pill?", "Goodbye, Mr Anderson..." and, of course, "I know kung fu!"



"Oh no: he's found Twitter. Pull him out, now!"

C'est incroyable!

Three more foreign language sci-fi films for your list

Technically speaking, *Metropolis* (1927) is a foreign language film, but it's a silent movie so it's up to you whether that counts. But if subtitles truly hold no fear for you, and you want to seek out some of World Cinema's finest sci-fi, we can thoroughly recommend...



Akira (1988, Japanese)
Director Katsuhiro Otomo's cyberpunk epic is the film that truly brought anime to the western audience's attention (because many kids didn't even realise that they were watching anime with *Marine Boy* and *Battle of the Planets*). A bleak apocalyptic vision of future Tokyo with some stunning visuals.



Stalker (1979, Russian)
You may have heard of director Andrei Tarkovsky because he directed the original *Solaris* (1972) on which the 2002 George Clooney-starring remake was based. That film's really good but *Stalker* – about a man who guides people through a mysterious 'zone' to a 'room' that can allegedly grant wishes – is even better, and just as mind-churning.



La Jetée (1962, French)
And now for something completely different. A 28-minute short arthouse time travel movie that tells its story through a series of black and white still images. Pretentious? Yeah, but also hypnotically watchable and an influence on Terry Gilliam's *12 Monkeys* (1995).



FORBIDDEN PLANET

Shakespeare given a sci-fi spin

1956

Based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *Forbidden Planet* was a sci-fi movie that audiences had never seen before. SF movies at the time were renowned for being low-budget B-movie shlock, while MGM was a studio renowned for making glossy musicals with immaculate production values. It was an odd mix, but MGM lavished all its best filmmaking resources on *Forbidden Planet*. The result is a gorgeous and wonderfully strange-looking film entirely set on an alien planet where we encounter invisible monsters, massive transistor-punk technology and the film's break-out star Robbie the Robot. Gene Roddenberry would later claim it was an inspiration for *Star Trek*.



ALIEN

Still the ultimate sci-fi horror

1979

Director Ridley Scott's seminal sci-fi horror is an exquisite beast. It introduced one of cinema's greatest alien menaces – a creature with a life cycle that would make even David Attenborough vomit, and which has a real dramatic flair for entrances (face-hugging, then chest bursting). The success of the alien was also down to the design work of penis-obsessed Swiss artist HR Giger. But the film's grimy, cramped ship, *USCSS Nostromo*, and world-weary crew also changed the aesthetic of deep space screen sci-fi, which had once been all about gleaming corridors and fancy uniforms.

It also had one of the best poster blurbs ever: "In space, no one can hear you scream".

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

Monolithic and inscrutable

1968

Love it or hate it, *2001: A Space Odyssey* is one of the most extraordinary sci-fi films ever made. Very loosely based on an Arthur C Clarke story, it's the tale of aliens using weird monoliths to influence the development of humanity from the time we were apes, apparently, to get us to the technological point where we could reach across space and make contact with them. Oh, and there's a spaceship computer having a nervous breakdown too.

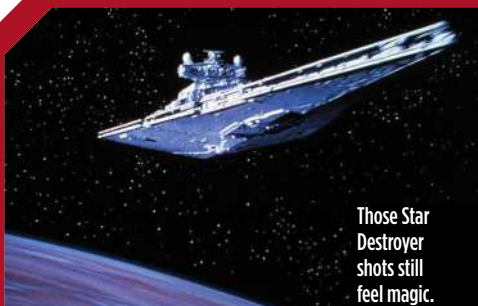
But this isn't a film about the plot, and the sparse dialogue is pretty banal anyway. This is a film of exquisite visual poetry, baffling images and immaculate craftsmanship.



Interior shots of the *Discovery* were shot on a giant centrifuge.



© ALAMY X (11)



Those Star Destroyer shots still feel magic.



Princess Leia murdered the typical 'damsel in distress' trope.

"What do you mean they want me to star in a holiday special?"



STAR WARS EPISODE IV: A NEW HOPE Feel the Force

1977

Fans will forever argue about whether *A New Hope* or *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) is the better film. While there's little doubt that *Empire* is one of the best sequels ever made, or that it has some of the franchise's most memorable set pieces (the battle on Hoth, Han in the carbon freezing chamber, "I am your father!"), the original *Star Wars* clearly remains the more important, game-changing film.

And not just in terms of its influence on science fiction. *Star Wars* changed the visual grammar of action movies as a whole, ushering in a whole new era of summer blockbuster. The style of editing and pacy storytelling that writer/director George Lucas chose for *Star Wars* was an update of cinema serials of the 1930s; indeed,

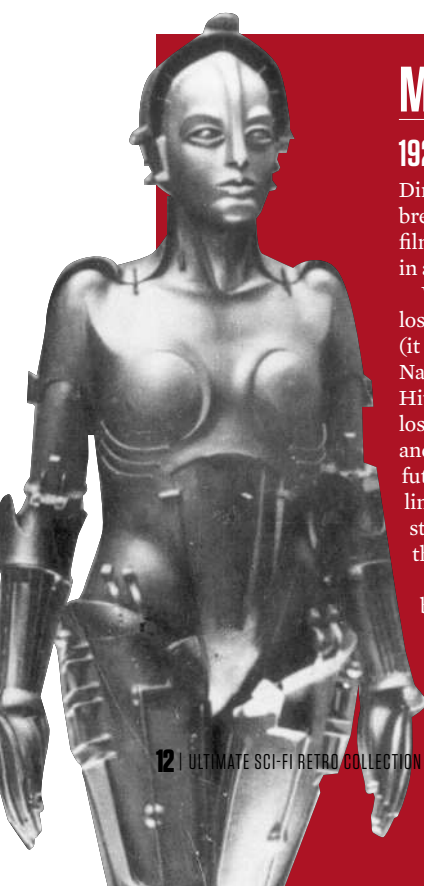
he originally wanted to remake *Flash Gordon* but couldn't secure the rights.

Instead, he created his own mythology and crafted a western-influenced space opera full of eye-catching spaceships, lavish sets and swashbuckling heroes. Names and terms from the film immediately swamped popular culture

“Lucas created his own mythology and crafted a western-influenced space opera full of eye-catching spaceships”

and have never gone away: Darth Vader, X-wings, lightsabers, Jedi, Death Star, droids, the list goes on. Suddenly every space-based movie needed laser blasters, sleek fighter craft, dogfights, cute robots and alien allies.

The influence of *Star Wars* on science fiction is undeniable. And while that first film may not have the grittiness and wittier dialogue of its successor (or hulking AT-ATs marching to a frosty rebel base) it does have Luke Skywalker standing in the twin sunset of Tatooine, and the first and best attack on a Death Star. Oh, and Peter Cushing as Grand Moff Tarkin, in a performance that loses none of its power when you learn that if his feet are out of shot, he was probably wearing carpet slippers.



METROPOLIS The City of Angles

1927

Director Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* is a strange brew, marrying German expressionist filmmaking aesthetic to a *Frankenstein* story set in a high-rise dystopia.

While some of the nuances may have become lost in time, translation and cultural differences (it was made in Germany during the rise of the Nazis, though Lang was horrified to find out that Hitler adored the film), *Metropolis*'s impact has lost none of its majesty. It may be silent and black and white, but it still feels like the future. Well, a future. Some alternate future where the art deco lines of the metropolis's edifices kept their stranglehold on architectural design. Honestly, the buildings are nothing short of masterpieces.

The upper regions of the city are inhabited by rich businessmen, while the workers labour on demonic machines in the bowels of the metropolis. Freder – the louche son of the city's boss, Fredersen – becomes fascinated

by a worker called Maria. As she's basically a union leader and a pain in the backside, Fredersen isn't keen on his son fraternising with her. So he gets a scientist to make a robot copy of Maria, as you do, that he uses to infiltrate the workers to discredit the real Maria. But it all ends in revolution. Which is a bit of a flaw in the plan.

Okay, so things like character motivation aren't as finessed as we'd expect these days. But the film is a visual feast. George Lucas credits the Robot Maria as a direct influence on C-3PO while the cityscapes of *Blade Runner* owe a huge debt to Lang's *Metropolis*. Queen were also clearly fans, using the film's most famous images in the video for their 1984 single 'Radio Gaga'.



The distant past's vision of the future is striking.

The effects still hold up remarkably well today.

BLADE RUNNER Is Deckard the retiring type?

1982

Blade Runner is one of the most influential sci-fi films ever made, regularly topping polls of the greatest sci-fi films ever made. *Blade Runner* was also a box office flop. A massive one.

But it's easy to see why the great unwashed failed to connect with director Ridley Scott's immersive sci-fi experience. Despite starring Harrison Ford, this is no pacy action romp in the vein of *Star Wars* or *Indiana Jones*. There are no quipping and roughish grins here; Ford instead delivers a masterclass in understatement, letting a vaguely raised eyebrow do the work of an entire ream of dialogue.

Ford plays Rick Deckard, who's clearly based on film noir gumshoes, though Deckard isn't a private eye solving lurid murder cases. He's a *Blade Runner*, employed to hunt down rogue replicants – synthetic humans – and 'retire' them. That's a euphemism for shooting them dead, basically. And he does it all with the dogmatic world-weariness of a bug exterminator desperate to reach retirement age.

He may have met his match in Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer), a replicant fuelled by righteous indignation that his kind are made with an expiration date. Batty wants to meet his creator,

the boss of the Tyrell Corporation and get that sorted. Because that's going to end well, right?

There is some action. Highly stylised action. But mostly this film is about a brooding atmosphere, procedural investigation and existential angst, all wrapped in some of the most sumptuous visuals ever created for a sci-fi movie.

There used to be a gag about retro sci-fi films and TV: 'nothing dates like the future'. But the exquisite visuals of *Blade Runner* have barely aged at all. Created in a pre-CGI era the effects are the height of what old-fashioned, hands-on special FX could achieve while the sets are awesomely detailed things of beauty.

From vast cityscapes choked by advertising to rain-soaked streets full of steaming food stalls, this still feels like the dystopian Los Angeles of tomorrow despite the film being – technically – set in the past: 2019. To this day, if you see a sci-fi cityscape heaving with digital advertising you can't help thinking, '*Blade Runner*'.

The film also boasts one of the most poetic and moving lines in all sci-fi cinema. Written by Rutger Hauer himself, they are Roy Batty's dying words: "All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain."



Squint and you can see echoes of *Metropolis* in the visuals.

Ford's Deckard is a world away from the likes of Han Solo.



© ALAMY (8)



THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

JOSEPH MCCABE LOOKS BACK AT THIS CHILLINGLY MEMORABLE SCIENCE FICTION CLASSIC WHICH STILL FEELS STRIKINGLY RELEVANT TODAY

A SUNNY AFTERNOON IN WASHINGTON DC. Children play, lovers picnic, and excited dogs run across the wide stretches of grass that surround the monuments of America's capital city. But something is amiss in the midday afternoon. It starts as a low, distant hum. A sound that grows louder as a blinding oval of light becomes visible and glides along the clear blue sky. As even the noon sun is paled by its brilliance, the disc descends, and its form is defined as a metal saucer. The children and passersby are hypnotised, transfixed. They watch with mouths agape as the saucer descends on that most American of all landmarks – the capital mall. Finally, it lands and its light fades, replaced with only the cool exterior of a device more foreign, more frightening, than any enemy warcraft.

A crowd cautiously approaches the saucer, and a barricade is quickly erected. The military arrives, tanks and guns trained on the giant disc, poised for attack. The saucer... moves. A smooth ramp protrudes from its mid-section, and a small door slides open atop it. Something emerges. It's a humanoid figure, helmeted and clad in a gleaming metallic suit. It walks to the rim of the saucer, and declares, in a man's voice, "We have come to visit you in peace, and with good will."

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR

The visitor descends the ramp, a small metal rod clutched in one hand. The crowd draws a breath. Upon reaching the lawn, he continues toward them. He raises the object and points it at them. From the object's outer casing springs forth a ring of needles, each of them glistening in the sunlight. A young GI, sitting atop a tank, can't stand it any longer. He fires a shot at the stranger, tearing open his arm, and blasting the tiny rod out of his hand. The visitor collapses on the lawn, and the military moves forward. As they approach him, a metal giant

steps out of the saucer, and trains a pulsating electronic eye at one of the tanks, instantly disintegrating it with a destructive ray. The visitor quickly shouts some words of a language never before heard on earth, and the robot stops, frozen in place. The soldiers see the visitor to his feet. "It was a gift," he says, indicating the shattered rod on the lawn, "for your president. With this he could have studied life on the other planets." The soldiers take custody of the stranger, confident once more in their power, their authority. But their actions today will have repercussions for their world, repercussions that will be felt on another day. The day on which everything changes. The day the Earth stood still.

Though director Robert Wise's seminal 1950s science fiction screen classic was concerned with nothing less than the survival of humanity in the newly born atomic age, its origins were modest. It began like so many films of its era, as a product of the dying Hollywood studio system. Julian Blaustein, a staff producer for 20th Century Fox, and his assistant began searching for a suitable subject for a thoughtful SF film. "People don't buy tickets to listen to lectures," Blaustein once remarked. "You defeat yourself if you try to say something in purely politically oriented statements. It becomes a bore." He told his assistant, "Our theme is that peace is no longer a four-letter word." After reading "a couple hundred science fiction stories and novels," the pair found a tale in the October 1940 issue of the popular magazine *Astounding* – Harry Bates's

“ It was very important
to make it as real and
believable as possible ”

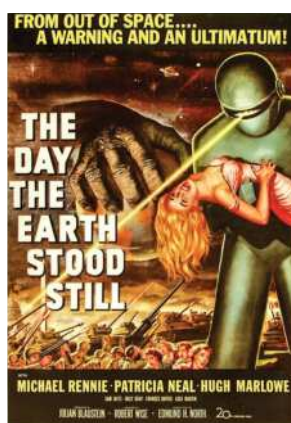
“Farewell to the Master”. “It was about forty-two pages,” said Blaustein. “And I just didn’t like very much about the story, but what I did like really started the wheels turning...”

Bates’s tale provided the basic setup for *Day*, in which a visitor from another world travels to Earth in peace, only to be attacked by those who fear the unusual. “The idea that what turns out to be a man steps off the spaceship, brings an offering as a gift, but because it’s strange and certainly unusual, he’s immediately shot at by our military and seriously wounded... That appealed to me. The way that we deal with strange things is with weapons, guns. No effort at finding out how the other person thinks, feels, works. Different from us? Kill him!”

BETTER DEAD THAN RED

Broad as this theme was, it was certainly controversial in the early 1950s, when McCarthyism was in its infancy, and the Red Scare was just gaining momentum in the United States. As Kenneth Von Gunden and Stuart H Stock describe it in the chapter on *Day* in their definitive study *Twenty All-Time Great Science Fiction Films*: “There was a very real fear that Communist-controlled producers and screenwriters were secretly inserting party propaganda into movie scripts.” But factor in that America had dropped the first atomic bomb on Japan just a few years earlier, and that the polarising Korean War was one year underway, and any concerns about blacklisting on the part of Blaustein were tempered by an even greater fear – that the world’s destruction was imminent.

Blaustein brought in Edward H North, a staff writer at Fox, to adapt Bates’s story to the screen. North developed the character of Klaatu, the kindly alien visitor, who – in an effort to better understand humanity – disguises himself as an ordinary man and befriends an understanding widow and her son, eventually enlisting their aid in demonstrating the awesome might of his people, by neutralising all electricity on Earth for 30 minutes (only hospitals, planes in flight, and “things of that nature” are spared). Klaatu is eventually gunned down, but he’s brought back to life by his giant robot companion Gort (“Gnut” in Bates’s story), who – it’s revealed in the film’s



Michael Rennie as Klaatu channels a cold confidence.

climax – is an intergalactic law enforcement officer that Klaatu’s race has surrendered some of their sovereignty to in order to insure the survival of their race. The only means of stopping Gort is the three-word command the film would make famous: “Klaatu barada nikto.”

North’s religious symbolism – Klaatu adopts the name “Carpenter” before he’s killed, resurrected and ascends into the heavens in his ship – went unnoticed at the time by director Robert Wise. Wise had made his Hollywood breakthrough as an editor, cutting *Citizen Kane* for Orson Welles, before honing his skills as a director of suspense and the fantastic for legendary RKO genre producer Val Lewton. For Lewton, Wise directed 1940s gems like *The Curse of the Cat People* and *The Body Snatcher*. On *Day*, he applied his gift for cool, realistic drama, and once more grounded a story many may have perceived as a little too fantastic.

“Because of the nature of this story,” said Wise, “I felt it was very important to make it as real and believable as possible. We had this opportunity of having a visitor from another planet come to us, so let’s make it as everyday as we can in terms of the settings, the surroundings. This place,

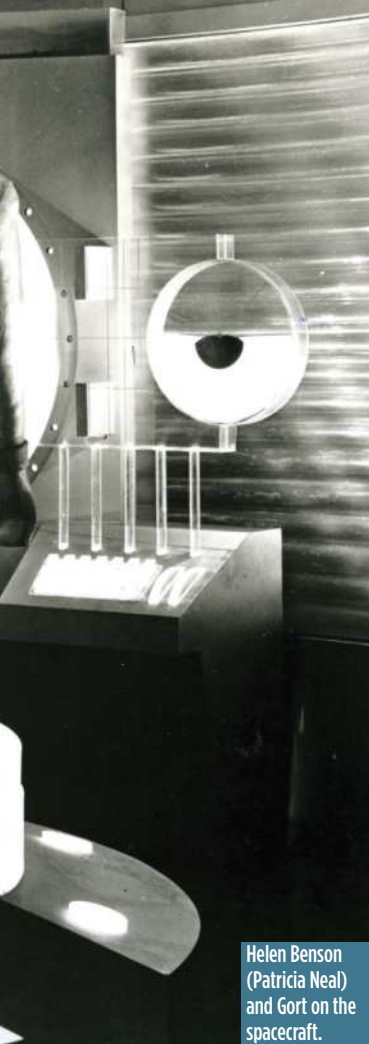
Washington DC, is the capital of our country – we see the streets, the buildings of Washington, and the homes of Washington, and I thought it was very important to make this as down-to-earth and believable as possible – to put our character from the other planet right in the midst of the ordinary, everyday life of people in this country.”

To that end, Wise was helped immensely by cinematographer Leo Tover, whose black-and-white photography, deep and crisp, underlined the human drama that distinguished *Day* from the many gaudy colour sci-fi spectacles of its decade. “I was happy to do it in black and white,” said Wise, “and get as much of a realistic documentary feel as possible, even though it was a fiction piece.”

The black and white also allowed for the careful placement of shadows across Gort, whose eight-foot-tall costumes – worn by seven-foot, six-inch Lock Martin, an actor and former doorman at Grauman’s Chinese Theater – were lined with laces. When Gort walked towards the camera, he wore a costume with the laces on the back; and when he walked away from the camera, he wore a second costume, on which laces were in front.



Klaatu with his oversized metallic mate Gort.



Helen Benson
(Patricia Neal)
and Gort on the
spacecraft.

“The way that we deal
with strange things is with
weapons, guns”



Klaatu and Gort
depart after
giving Earth a
stern talking to.

Wise brought in composer Bernard Hermann, with whom he'd worked on *Citizen Kane*, to compose *Day's* eerie, memorable score. Hermann, well known to genre fans for dozens of classic compositions (including those for Ray Harryhausen and Alfred Hitchcock's finest efforts), created electronic themes for the film years before *Forbidden Planet* popularised the style for sci-fi cinema. "I felt," said Hermann, shortly before his death in 1975, "we should do it by taking advantage of using electronic instruments, which hadn't been done then."

THE JUDAS TOUCH

Wise also enlisted future Academy Award-winner (and wife of famed children's book author Roald Dahl) Patricia Neal in the role of Helen, the widow whom Klaatu befriends; and Hugh Marlowe (later to star in the Harryhausen epic *Earth Vs the Flying Saucers*) as Helen's boyfriend Tom – the film's "Judas," who betrays Klaatu for a shot at fame. Klaatu himself would be played by British actor Michael Rennie,



Gort was
played by Lock
Martin, a former
doorman.

despite the protests of studio chief Darryl F Zanuck, who wanted Spencer Tracy in the role, and Wise's instinct to go with Claude Rains, who was then too busy with a stage production to sign on. Michael Rennie's performance, understated yet confident, cool but impassioned, is perhaps the definitive screen portrait of benign life. He's entirely believable in the climax, as he delivers the film's pivotal speech about universal peace through compromise.

"The main idea in that story that was appealing was that peace in the universe had been achieved by sacrificing some sovereignty to a central agency," says Blaustein. "But irrevocably. So that the United Nations, for us, became the focal point of the way to go to world peace. Give the United Nations full authority to step in, to put down violence wherever they saw it. Give them the equipment, the manpower – which of course we knew was unrealistic. To give up sovereignty is something that's very hard to ask heavily nationalistic entities to do. But it was an idea that was very appealing."

Today – with seemingly never-ending war, a worldwide pandemic, civil strife on every continent, and stark divides in American politics – the appeal of Blaustein's idea has, sadly, not lessened. But neither has the conviction with which other filmmakers choose to tackle it. The *Day the Earth Stood Still's* legacy can be seen on screen in everything from *2001: A Space Odyssey* to *The Man Who Fell to Earth* and *ET The Extra-Terrestrial*, from Spielberg's mothership to the ominous shadows of *Independence Day*. It's a warning, an inspiration and an enduring touchstone of fantasy film.

Klaatu! Barada! Nikto!

Three words that
form the most
famous command
in science fiction
and that have
inspired countless
pop culture
references...

>> **Army of Darkness** – In the capstone to director Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* trilogy, Ash must retrieve the *Necronomicon* (the Book of the Dead) by trying, in vain, to speak a variation on Day's famous command... "Klaatu Verada Nikto." Why the variation? Raimi and company were also unsure how the words were pronounced!

>> **Return of the Jedi** – One of the aliens on board Jabba the Hutt's sail barge is named Nikto, and two of the guards on his flying skiff are named Klaatu and Barada.



>> **Willow** – George Lucas must be quite a fan of *Day*... In his high fantasy epic *Willow*, the title character recites the words when attempting a transmutation spell.

>> **The X-Files** – Agent Fox Mulder has the words mounted on a wall in his office. (They also make office cameos in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *Tron*.)

>> **Klaatu, the Band** – In 1973, a Canadian prog rock group took the name of *Day's* alien and recorded under it for eight years. Their Beatlesque sound inspired rumours they were actually the Fab Four in disguise. Had these rumours turned out to be true, the music world *would* have stood still.



LOVING THE ALIEN



JUST OVER FOUR DECADES
AGO THIS MAY, A LITTLE
MOVIE CALLED **ALIEN**
CHANGED EVERYTHING.
LUKE DORMEHL HITCHES
A RIDE ABOARD THE
NOSTROMO...

BY ALL RIGHTS, ALIEN SHOULD not have turned out nearly as well as it did. Greenlit in the wake of *Star Wars*, when every studio executive in Hollywood was desperately searching for sci-fi scripts, it was a derivative idea which owed its inspirations to schlocky low-budget B-movies with titles like *Planet Of The Vampires* and *Night Of The Blood Beast*. It was originated by two largely unproven screenwriters, Dan O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett, with a first draft titled *Star Beast*. But under the guidance of producers Walter Hill and David Giler, with direction from a visionary filmmaker and some other incredibly fortuitous developments, *Alien* became a classic.

All involved delivered superb contributions which made *Alien* not only a great movie in its own right, but one of the most influential movies in its genre.

It's tough to work out where to start with *Alien's* brilliance, but its cast may be the right place. For a movie that is, in essence, a slasher in space – or *Jaws* in space – *Alien* pulled together a superb ensemble of performers to play the doomed Nostromo crew. John Hurt as the alien's first victim Kane had previously appeared in productions as diverse as *A Man For All Seasons* and *Midnight Express*. Villainous science officer (and undercover android) Ash was played by reputable Shakespearean actor Ian Holm. Yaphet Kotto, playing Parker, was much in demand after portraying the villainous Dr Kananga in Roger Moore's James Bond debut *Live And Let Die*. Harry Dean Stanton was a character actor of note. Veronica Cartwright, as Lambert, had won an Emmy at the age of just 14. The least known of the cast, a newcomer called Sigourney Weaver, would become the most famous of them all. Before casting Weaver in the role of survivor Ellen Ripley, *Alien's* producers had considered Meryl Streep for the role.

The cast lifted the source material far beyond its B-movie roots, in which the crew (all with different names) are nondescript male characters. They make the audience care about the victims of the alien in a way that can't be said for many movies in the genre. It very nearly didn't happen.

"I remember getting the offer and reading the material," said Tom Skerritt, who played the Nostromo's captain Dallas. "I asked for more background, and they said they had a budget of \$2 million and no director. I read it and, well, it's not really an actor's script. At the time, I was being spoiled by having a

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(ACID) BLOOD LINES

The movies that helped inspire *Alien*...

Alien may have been the start of a franchise, but the core story was already a B-movie staple. In 1951's *The Thing (From Another World)*, a derelict spacecraft is found in the Arctic circle. When a frozen alien crewmember is taken back to an army research station, it is accidentally thawed and begins killing everyone. A similar plot is found in 1958's *It! The Terror From Beyond Space*, in which a space expedition returns from Mars, only to discover that it has somehow taken aboard a space vampire which stalks the crew one at a time. Consider also 1956's *Forbidden Planet*, which deals with an abandoned civilisation, a murderous creature which changes form, and a robot which prefigures the synthetic characters of Ash and Bishop in the first two *Alien* movies. Other entries in the pantheon include 1958's *Fiend Without a Face* (for an early facehugger-type creature), 1965's *Planet Of The Vampires*, and plenty more. Given their considerably lower budgets, you'll be hard pressed to find a movie among them that's a patch on Ridley Scott's movie. However, they lay the groundwork that was brilliantly revisited and improved upon by *Alien*.



lot of good roles coming along. My work up until that point involved directors like Robert Altman and Hal Ashby. It didn't come off the page."

Skerritt turned the script down. However, he revisited it shortly after when Ridley Scott became attached as director. Scott – in his late thirties at the time – was still an unproven commodity in Hollywood, but he had shown himself as a filmmaker to watch through his movie debut, 1976's *The Duellists*. "I remembered Ridley's name because I was so impressed by the work," Skerritt said.

Scott was a tremendous visualist, his skills honed by his previous successful career as a high-profile commercials director for everyone from Levi-Strauss Jeans to Hovis bread. Skerritt was awed by his mastery of every aspect of the filmmaking process. "Watching him work was amazing," he recalled. "He impressed me the way that it must have been for other actors watching Orson Welles when he was doing *Citizen Kane*."

For Scott, *Alien* became the launchpad for a Hollywood career that has lasted ever since.

A BEATEN-UP WORLD

Working with talented production designers and art directors, Scott's vision for the world of *Alien* (and particularly the Nostromo spaceship) was for a roughhouse, lived-in science fiction universe wholly at odds with the pristine futurism of a movie like Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. His concept was partially inspired after spotting graffiti in the toilet of a beaten-up 747 airplane during one of his many London-to-US flights. It was a blend of cutting edge technology and mundane, grubby reality. "I applied all this thinking, except having jumped ahead, say, a hundred years," he told author Tom Shone for the book *Blockbuster*.

But Scott was not a great director of actors at this stage in his career. Skerritt recalled how the first rehearsal, in Scott's London office, set the tone. "We started doing a little bit of dialogue, and then he would interrupt to describe his visuals," he said. "It was fascinating but, in the half hour we were doing this, we only got a couple of lines in. He was so caught up in the vision of it." The rehearsal was interrupted when an assistant director came in to speak to Scott about a technical issue. The director apologised and left the room. Skerritt remembered: "I immediately looked around at everybody and said, 'I guess this makes me the captain of the ship. We might as well all know that we're in this together.'"

Scott, it turned out, didn't become more hands on with his actors when the shoot started. The only time Skerritt recalls him commenting was after they had shot the breakfast scene, prior to the Nostromo landing on the planetoid LV-426. Scott's comment after the scene? "Interesting." Skerritt remembers: "That was about the only thing I remember him saying to us."



Sigourney Weaver suits up for the role that would make her name.



The derelict and its dead pilot clues us in to the danger to come.

Alien is, at its heart, a monster movie – and a movie like this is only as good as its monster. Prefiguring John Carpenter's *The Thing*, the xenomorph constantly shifts forms. It begins as the facehugger, which impregnates Kane, only to violently emerge as the notorious chestbuster ("When it happened, it scared the hell out of me," Skerritt recalled of that scene). Finally it grows to the fully grown killer, although even then it is shown in such tiny snatches that its form remains a mystery until the final moments.

Keeping the alien hidden in this way was, according to Skerritt, inspired by a similar approach director Tobe Hooper had taken with *Leatherface*, the antagonist in his 1974 film *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. Ridley Scott had seen the movie and was impressed by it. "That's what he thought would work best with the creature," Skerritt explains. "Your own mind is much more frightening than what you might see. That's how you get your audience. Less is more."



The alien's strange, but iconic appearance – along with those of the chestburster, facehugger, alien ship and doomed “space jockey” – came courtesy of the late Swiss artist HR Giger. Giger's designs for the creature recall a twisted blend of insect and serpent, with nods to the feverish imaginations of HP Lovecraft and Francis Bacon. Along with the vaginal imagery of the gaping doors of the derelict alien ship and alien egg, and the not-so-subtle fears of male childbirth, the phallic head of the alien gives the movie a weirdly sexual Freudian horror vibe which could keep shrinks in business for years.

As terrifying as the xenomorph was, though, it also led to one of Skerritt's favourite memories of the shoot. “[It was a] lunch break where the 71” gentleman who was wearing the alien outfit had his head off, and was talking politics or economics with the 5’ tall wardrobe mistress,” he laughs. “He was wearing bright blue Adidas tennis shoes. His tail was being carried by one of the wardrobe assistants. I’m so sorry I didn’t have a camera.”

ALIEN BURSTS FORTH

Alien was shot at Shepperton Studios, just outside London. Its original budget of \$4.5

million eventually expanded to \$9 million, the same cost as the first *Star Wars*. It was filmed over 16 weeks, with an additional several months of post production. It was released on 25 May 1979. This was, by design, exactly two years to the day after *Star Wars*. Despite facing tough competition at the box office from films including *Rocky II*, *Moonraker*, and reissues of *Jaws* and *Star Wars*, *Alien* proved a success. It raked in \$40 million in the US and \$100 million worldwide.

It proved a hit with critics as well, even if the initial reviews played up the film as a fun scary romp instead of a haunting classic. “Unpretentious, skilfully sustained, technically dazzling,” screamed John Hartl of the *Seattle Times*. “Seeing *Alien* is like stepping onto a funhouse ride,” proclaimed Michael Janusonis of the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*. “Terrific fun for everyone,” said Jack Kroll of *Newsweek*.

At the 52nd Academy Awards, held in April 1980, *Alien* received one Oscar for Best Visual Effects. In doing so, it beat out other



SFX-friendly titles including the aforementioned *Bond* film *Moonraker* and *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. It was nominated for “Best Art Direction” too, but lost to the musical *All That Jazz*.

Skerritt remembers his enjoyment at seeing the movie in cinemas. To him, it delivered on all the promise he felt Ridley Scott's vision presented. “I knew when we were making it that we had something extraordinary,” he remembered. “Beyond just being a terrifying film, this was upscale terror. That's what you felt right from the beginning.”

Unlike today, when sequels are greenlit before a movie even opens, *Alien* took a long time for a successor to arrive. That was 1986's *Aliens*, a James Cameron movie which took the franchise in a more action-oriented direction. Since then, the alien has been the basis for many more movies, comics, videogames and more – including two prequels from Scott himself.

However, nothing has ever made us quite as petrified as the 1979 original. In space no one can hear you scream. On Earth, on the other hand...



REX (3), GETTY (1), BACKGROUND: ISTOCK

STAR TREK

THE MOTION PICTURE

IT'S WORTH REVISITING
THE VISUALLY THRILLING, INTELLECTUALLY
PROBING ADVENTURE THAT LAUNCHED THE
ENTERPRISE ON THE BIG SCREEN, ARGUES
OLIVER PFEIFFER



BOLDLY GOING WHERE NO MAN has gone before is a phrase rarely attributed to *Star Trek's* first cinematic adventure. Considered a lesser entry in the canon, the film has been criticised for its lumbering pace, thin plot, lack of action and ambiguous antagonist. But besides being the most visually immersive of the original movie series, it's the epic quality and rich themes in the story that should single *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* out for re-evaluation.

"It dealt with a very large concept, namely, a possible next step up in human evolution," said acclaimed sci-fi novelist Alan Dean Foster, who is credited with the film's story. "I doubt anyone connected with the film employed that as a selling point to Paramount. More likely they said, 'There's this giant warship that's going to destroy the Earth and only the crew of the Enterprise can stop it.'"

Foster's story centred on an alien ship named V'Ger that destroys everything in its path and becomes a major threat to mankind. Sent on a mission to intercept it, the USS Enterprise learns that V'Ger is actually a lost space probe that achieved a kind of consciousness and now seeks to evolve by merging with its "Creator". The story itself had evolved from an outline given to Foster by *Star Trek's* own creator, Gene Roddenberry. "I'd novelised the entire *Star Trek* animated TV series which is what brought me to the notice of Roddenberry," said Foster. "He handed me two pages of notes called 'Robot's Return' which was the basic idea that we sent a probe out and it comes back – that was essentially all there was," he recalled. "He said to me 'See if you can do anything with this', so I proceeded to expand on it considerably."

There was trepidation as to whether the TV series should be upgraded to a movie – and whether *Star Trek* would work at feature length. Dwindling ratings (along with decreasing production values) led to the cancellation of the original live-action TV show in 1969, three seasons after it had started. Though adventures continued with an animated series between 1973-1974 it was a decade until the film finally came to fruition.

Famously, fan enthusiasm and the successful syndication of the series abroad paved the way for a revival. Roddenberry's company Norway Productions had planned a follow-up series named "*Star Trek: Phase II*" that was to open with a two-hour TV movie centred on Foster's story "In Thy Image". However the subsequent success of *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters* convinced Paramount that *Star Trek* should go ahead with the revival as a motion picture.

“It dealt with a very large concept – human evolution”



Originally there was a Spock replacement called Xon.



Decker and Ilia's relationship is a cornerstone of the film.



Ilia returns to the Enterprise's med bay... or does she?

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"Did no one tell Bones that the collared uniform was a joke?"

Composing Trek's Iconic Theme

Jerry Goldsmith on his enduring composition

Having composed the extraordinarily organic music for the original *Planet Of The Apes*, Jerry Goldsmith was already highly respected for his contribution to the sci-fi genre and so was a natural choice to score *The Motion Picture*. "When you stop and think about it space is very romantic," he said. "It's about discovery and new life..." Synonymous with *Star Trek*, his main title theme would be reused for *The Next Generation* and Goldsmith would go on to score four more *Trek* adventures. But it was his innovative use of the "Blaster Beam" for V'Ger that remains most impressive - a throbbing, pulsating electronic instrument that perfectly echoes the strange alien enigma at the heart of *The Motion Picture*.



On account of royalty payment disputes, Leonard Nimoy was reluctant to return as Spock, therefore Foster hadn't included him in his original story. Xon, a completely Vulcan character was written in to replace him. But *Star Trek* just wasn't *Star Trek* without the popular pointy-eared half-human and so the studio decided to settle in a bid to coax Nimoy into reprising his iconic character.

BOLDLY GOING FORWARD...

With the complete cast assembled, Harold Livingston (the creative producer behind the aborted "Phase II" series) on screenwriting duties, two-time Oscar winning filmmaker Robert Wise (responsible for the original *The Day The Earth Stood Still* as well as *The Sound Of Music*) directing and Douglas Trumbull (the FX maestro behind *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Close Encounters*) as effects supervisor - not to mention pre-*Blade Runner* visual futurist Syd Mead as a production illustrator - everything appeared to be in place for an exhilarating adventure to rival *Star Wars*.

But it wasn't smooth sailing for the Starship Enterprise. In addition to continuous script revisions, the production shoot fell behind due to time-consuming FX sequences - such as a groundbreaking streaking effect for a scene where the Enterprise enters a wormhole. In addition, the innovative V'Ger sequences were delayed so that they could be properly planned and executed. The final week of production was equally problematic. There was the complex nature of the climatic fusing of Decker and V'Ger, which required extreme lighting conditions, leading to the illumination of invisible dust particles that later required further re-shoots and additional technical work to remove from the final print.

Production wrapped on 26 January 1979 after a lengthy 125-day shoot but sat in post production for

twice as long, due to the enhancements of further special effects. Robert Wise took a fresh print to its premiere screening at the KB MacArthur Theatre in Washington DC and the film finally opened in North America on 7 December 1979. However the director considered the film a "rough cut" of his original vision and regretted that it hadn't screened before a test audience.

Although poorly received by critics, the film went on to beat the previous box office record (held by *Superman*), in addition to receiving Oscar nominations for Best Art Direction, Best Visual Effects and Best Original Score - the later for Jerry Goldsmith, who composed the now legendary title theme.

The visuals would prove to be the most significant improvement over the original television series, which had previously demonstrated only passable FX. With its bigger budget, *The Motion Picture* showcased an impressive collection of detailed miniatures, matte paintings and physical and optical effects - the most impressive being Spock's hallucinatory spacewalk through V'Ger, a scene arguably even more hypnotic than the stargate sequence in *2001*.

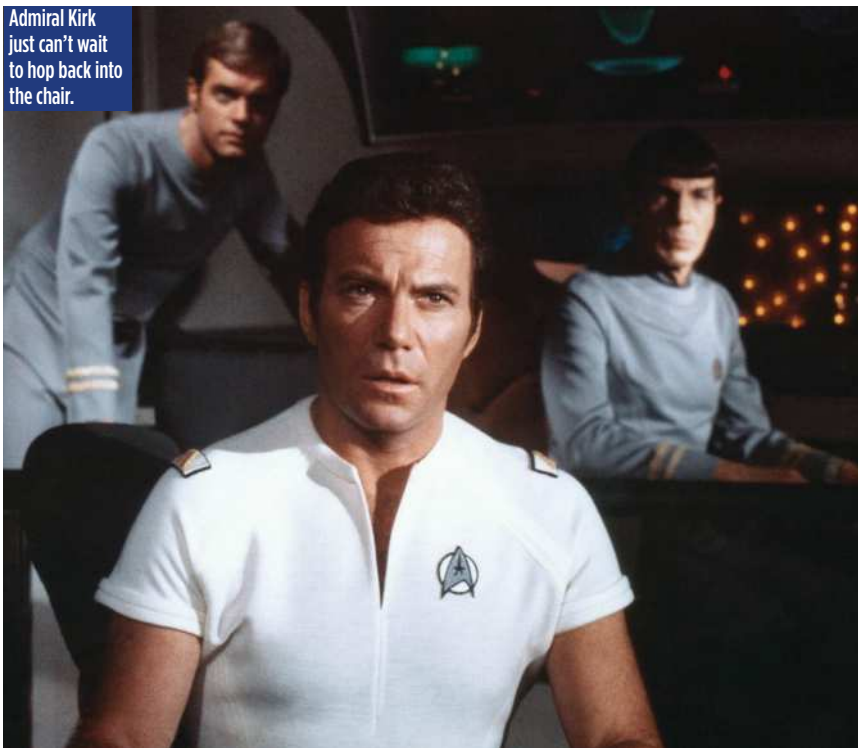
Judging *The Motion Picture* on its aesthetics alone is to overlook the probing nature of its underlying preoccupations concerning the limits of mankind and the possible next step in human evolution. "The first time you see it you get overwhelmed by the visuals and the second time you get to appreciate the story," argued Foster.

"The idea that we're dealing with machine intelligence, a different kind of intelligence and how people would react to that and how they would react to us,"

he reasoned. "This is one of the reasons why the film is sometimes knocked and one of the reasons it's successful."

"I thought the acting was strong but the film needed editing"

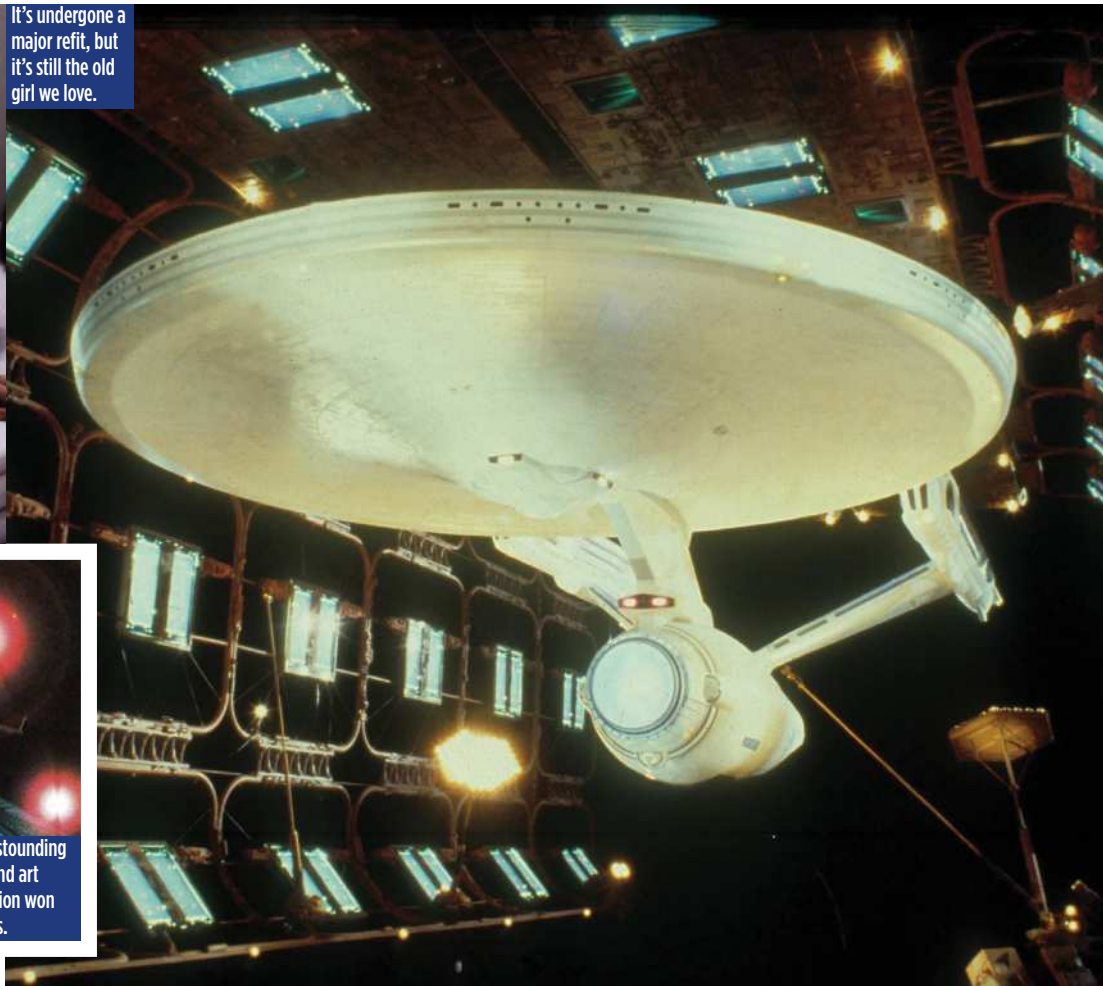
Admiral Kirk just can't wait to hop back into the chair.





"No, not yet Spock. Save it for the sequel damn it."

It's undergone a major refit, but it's still the old girl we love.



The astounding VFX and art direction won Oscars.

THE EMOTIONAL PICTURE

Though most of Foster's original story was altered considerably to accommodate, among other aspects, the inclusion of Spock and an additional female character called Ilia, the basic notion that we could merge with our machines in the future is intact, as is the addition of some interesting character developments. "I painted Kirk darker," admitted Foster, who was also responsible for promoting Kirk to Admiral. "Think of a typical sea captain stuck on land without a ship. That was how I saw Kirk. Suddenly he has the chance to regain command, but it means displacing those already in his position – very conflicting."

Indeed the growing tension between a disgruntled Kirk and Willard Decker – the young commanding officer (played by Stephen Collins) who challenges his command – is one of the driving forces in the movie, as is the romantic history between Decker and the ship's beautiful Deltan navigator Ilia, (the late Persis Khambatta) which provides emotional depth to the sudden sacrificial climax. *The Motion Picture* also showcases a noticeably colder Spock, who is apparently devoid of emotion when he's reunited with his fellow crew mates but who is ultimately allowed to develop, (even shedding a tear during a key moment that surfaces in the 2001 Director's Edition). Spock's personal search for pure logic leads to his comprehension of the motivations

behind V'Ger – a being which seeks to evolve beyond its programming in order to give itself meaning.

Contrary to popular belief, the film isn't devoid of humour, either – most of it emerges from the witty exchanges between Spock and Kirk. "Yes there's humour but it's more subtle," Foster recalled. "Actually there was a wonderful line that Leonard Nimoy improvised as they were shooting. Spock is standing there and he asks Kirk if McCoy is going to remain onboard. Kirk says yes and Nimoy said something like 'If Dr McCoy is going to remain onboard then my continued presence here is imperative'. It's a great, funny line and I wish they'd kept it in."

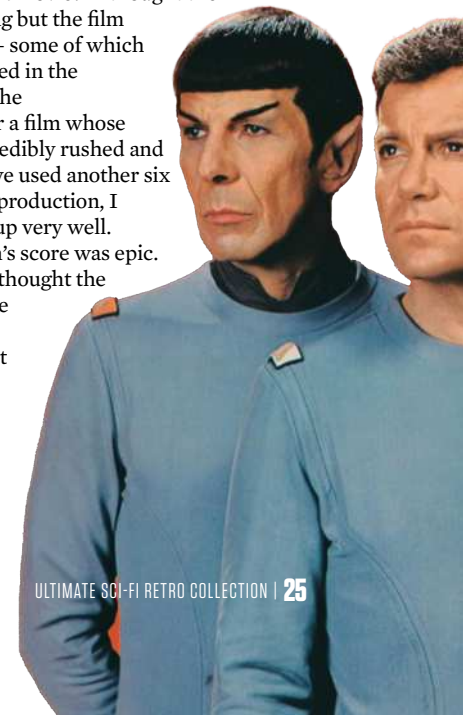
But the crew of the Enterprise could've been taken on an entirely different journey. In addition to V'Ger Foster submitted a story involving the crew of the Starship encountering a world akin to the old American South of the early 1800s – but with ethnic roles reversed. "Whites were the slaves and blacks the masters," Foster said. "Needless to say, Uhura played a critical role in the story. Among other things, it was deemed a bit too edgy... and violent."

A visually dense, immersive first-person cinematic experience, with a leisurely pace that permits greater appreciation of its aesthetic quality and overwhelming epic scope, *The Motion Picture* kickstarted the movie franchise and laid down the foundations on which the entire

Enterprise was built. JJ Abrams paid loving respect to Wise's original during his reveal of the new Enterprise in his *Star Trek* reboot. "I wanted [this scene] to feel like what I experienced when I first saw the original Robert Wise film," he said. "There was a five-minute sequence just introducing the Enterprise. It felt real... I saw the panels on the skin of the ship and the flood lights... I wanted it to be as much as possible a homage to that amazing original sequence."

And how satisfied is Foster with the original *Star Trek* movie? "I thought the acting was strong but the film needed editing – some of which was accomplished in the Director's Cut," he considered. "For a film whose release was incredibly rushed and which could have used another six months in post-production, I thought it held up very well. Jerry Goldsmith's score was epic. And of course I thought the script could have used some adjustments. But that will remain forever the province of another time and space."

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IT'S BEEN OVER 40
YEARS SINCE
**THE EMPIRE
STRIKES BACK**
REDEFINED WHAT
A BLOCKBUSTER
SEQUEL COULD BE.
HERE'S WHY THE
ORIGINAL TRILOGY'S
MIDDLE INSTALMENT
IS STILL THE BEST...

WORDS: **RICHARD EDWARDS**

SOME LIKE IT HOT



These days anybody who makes a sequel to a hit movie can't wait to tell you that it's darker and more mature than what came before. When *The Empire Strikes Back* took the *Star Wars* saga in a bleaker, entirely unexpected new direction, however, it felt as fresh and new as the original movie had three years earlier.

This was a kid-friendly movie that turned narrative convention on its head by putting its big action setpiece in the first act, before ending on a massive downer that left the story defiantly unresolved. While it made significantly less money than its predecessor – until *Solo*, it was the worst performing of all the live-action *Star Wars* – it's now regarded as the pinnacle of the franchise, the one where storytelling and drama lived up to the visuals. We look back at five big reasons it's long remembered...



I

A NEW ORDER

"DO OR DO NOT. THERE IS NO TRY."



IT'S ALMOST A CLICHÉ THAT NOBODY expected much from *Star Wars* at the box office – not even its creator George Lucas, whose canny move to negotiate the rights to any sequels turned out to be an act of incredible foresight. Once the first movie had become the biggest film of all time, a sequel was inevitable, but Lucas took the bold step of financing the film himself, using "everything I owned" as collateral. It was an incredibly risky move – he ran close to the financial wire on several occasions, with 20th Century Fox eager to swoop in to seize back control – but it meant Lucas was free to tell the story his way.

"This film was not a traditional sequel," he said on *The Empire Strikes Back* commentary track. "It didn't have a beginning and an end, [it had] a lot of big action sequences early on in the movie and it ends on a personal note. I'm not sure a studio would have gone along with that if they had their say."

Lucas knew he wanted the sequel to be less goofy and more sophisticated than his hit original, but decided he wasn't the writer or director to make it. He initially signed up Leigh Brackett, writer of Bogart/Bacall classic *The Big Sleep*, to turn his story into a script, but she died before completing the first draft. Lucas then hired Lawrence Kasdan (already at work on *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*) to take over, a decision



"Alas, poor C-3PO! I knew him, Chewbacca."

that arguably led to the characters – with the possible exception of R2-D2 and Chewbacca – sounding like actual humans.

When it came to finding a director, Lucas went *really* leftfield, hiring his former University of Southern California mentor Irvin Kershner. "I immediately said, 'I'm sorry but I can't do this,'" Kershner told *SFX* in 2008. "I think that it would be silly for me to make a film that tries to better what you have done. George said to me, 'This has to be even bigger than the first one – as well as being even better.' Even then I still turned it

down. But after a month of him phoning me, I finally agreed to go up to his studio."

Kershner had no previous experience of special effects films, but he proved to be the ideal fit. Far more comfortable handling actors than his new boss, he was given freedom to direct the film in London, while executive producer Lucas stayed in California to look after the effects scenes, and shield Kershner from any studio politics. This dream alchemy of talent and creativity behind the camera has never been matched in the *Star Wars* canon.

II

AT-ATS AND ASTEROIDS

“NEVER TELL ME THE ODDS!”

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK MAY HAVE BEEN AN independent production (albeit one of the biggest in history), but that didn't mean it wasn't ambitious. Its budget was more than double that of *A New Hope*, and it had significantly more effects shots.

Breaking with convention, a large proportion of those would come in the first section of the film, as the Rebels did a runner from their secret base on the icy world of Hoth. “I wanted the sequence to be exciting and unique,” says Lucas, “but at the same time I didn't want it to overwhelm the end of the movie.”

Unique it certainly was, as a herd of giant Imperial Walkers (AT-ATs) – inspired, in part, by the tripod war machines from HG Wells's *The War Of The Worlds* – trampled through the Hoth snow, Rebel Snowspeeders swarming around the gargantuan walking tanks like flies.

While most of the effects shots in *Star Wars* had taken place against the black of space, the white snow of Hoth meant big challenges for the geniuses at Industrial Light & Magic – not least because the dark matte lines surrounding every VFX element would be more visible. The AT-ATs themselves were created as stop-motion models stomping through meticulously realised miniature backgrounds, with snow made of baking powder and glass beads (the effects team spent the shoot in protective goggles and respirators), and animators popping up through trap doors in the floor to choreograph the ground assault.

When the Millennium Falcon eventually makes it past the Imperial blockade, it immediately finds itself in Empire's other major set-piece, as Han Solo defies odds of 3,720 to 1 by successfully navigating an asteroid field. It's a magnificent piece of filmmaking, the perfect blend of John Williams's score, spunky interplay on the Falcon and balletic visual effects. While the Falcon had moved in flat, straight lines in *A New Hope*, it was now showboating with complicated aerobatics around floating boulders.

Some of the effects, however, were defiantly old school. “Originally we had men rocking the cockpit around and it looked like hell,” Kershner told *SFX*. “No matter how hard they tried they couldn't get the motion I was looking for. So I used a handheld camera for those scenes in the asteroid belt and if I said, ‘Right!’ the actors threw themselves to the right and the cameras went to the left.”



The grumpy old man and his excited kids on Hoth.



Empire's effects took motion control to a new level.



“Uh, squad leader? I'm seeing... giant humans.”





III

THE FORCE AWAKENS

"JUDGE ME BY MY SIZE, DO YOU?"



EVEN BY THE STANDARDS OF MYSTICAL ENERGY fields, the Force was a nebulous concept in *A New Hope*. Sure, there was the odd Jedi mind trick, the strangling of a subordinate, and some million-to-one nailing of a womp rat-sized target, but it never seemed *that* big a deal. In *The Empire Strikes Back*, however, the Force truly awakens.

From the moment an upside-down Luke summons his lightsaber to strike down a wampa, it's easy to see why Ben Kenobi was such a Force fanboy – indeed, it's not long before we're seeing an X-Wing fly by Force propulsion, visions of the future, and immersive cave-based experiences open to deep philosophical interpretation.

Unfortunately Lucas had killed off Obi-Wan, his only experienced Force practitioner, leaving a big hole in the exposition department. The character to fill the hole was a diminutive old Jedi on the jungle world of Dagobah; unfortunately, nobody had any idea how to make him real.

One early idea for Yoda would have featured a trained monkey in a mask, but for obvious reasons that was quickly abandoned. Lucas instead turned to Jim Henson to help create the most ambitious puppet co-star in cinema history.

Yoda was designed by prosthetics legend Stuart Freeborn (creator of the apes in *2001: A Space Odyssey*'s "Dawn of Man" sequence) who based Yoda's look on a mixture of his own face and Albert Einstein's wrinkles – he felt the latter conveyed wisdom and intelligence. Frank "Miss Piggy" Oz was the puppeteer who had to get his vocal cords around Yoda's backwards syntax.

"Yoda was definitely the most difficult character to design," recalled Kershner. "He was supposed to blink, and his eyes were meant to move around and focus. His ears had to move as well. But when we actually shot Yoda I couldn't get the eyes to blink or his ears to move around. Nothing worked with that puppet and it took us a lot of time to fix that."

Working with Yoda proved particularly challenging for Mark Hamill who, as Luke Skywalker, was "the only human being on the call sheet for months". Unable to hear anything said by his rubbery green co-star, he had to act to timings and directions given by Kershner. Remarkably it all came together, and Yoda became the breakout star of the film.



"Oh Kermie...
I mean,
Skywalker!
Dammit."

Designer
Stuart
Freeborn gets
his Yoda on.



Skywalker
swears he's
never going to
drink again.



THE EMPIRE STRIKES FACT!

**Bite-size trivia from a
galaxy far, far away...**

George Lucas resigned his membership of the Directors' Guild of America after they fined him for not including credits in front of the movie. The special dispensation he'd obtained for doing this in *A New Hope* no longer applied.

It's Leia who mentions the ubiquitous "bad feeling about this" while taking a walk in the space slug's belly.

The obligatory (slightly tenuous) 1138 reference appears when General Rieekan orders "Rogues 10 and 11 to section 38."

Mark Hamill nearly diced with death while filming the scene where he's floating in bacta. Just before he climbed in, a light above shattered, sending large shards of glass into the tank.



Leia's "nerf herder" insult inspired the name of the band behind the *Buffy* theme tune.

Future *Cheers* star and ever-present Pixar cast member John Ratzenberger plays Hoth deck officer Major Derlin.

Concept artist Ralph McQuarrie and effects whiz/*Rocketeer* director Joe Johnston also have Echo Base cameos.

Admiral Ozzel, the Imperial Officer remotely strangled by Darth Vader, is played by Michael Sheard, who'd go on to scare a generation of kids as *Grange Hill*'s Big Bad Mr Bronson.

Admiral Piett, aka Kenneth Colley, is the only Imperial officer to appear in more than one original trilogy movie.

Kershner wanted the Rebels to talk in American accents, with all the Imperials having English tones. Wonder why...

By a freaky coincidence, on the DVD edition C-3PO quotes the odds of successfully negotiating an asteroid field at 3720-1, when the timer is at... 37:20. Sadly, this doesn't work on other formats.

The Exogorth space slug was played by a giant hand puppet.

Before being replaced by Ian McDiarmid for the 2004 DVD edition, the Emperor was played by Marjorie Eaton (*Mary Poppins*), with those weird chimpanzee eyes added in post-production. Voice actor Clive Revill's name still appears in the credits, even though he no longer features in the updated movie.

Jeremy Bulloch makes an appearance outside Boba Fett's helmet - he also plays Lt Sheckil, the Imperial officer who uses Leia as a human shield in Cloud City.

The braids on Boba Fett's suit are supposedly Wookiee hair scalped from previous bounties.

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A still from
the infamous
deleted love
duet. Possibly.



IV

LOVE STORY

"I LOVE YOU." "I KNOW."



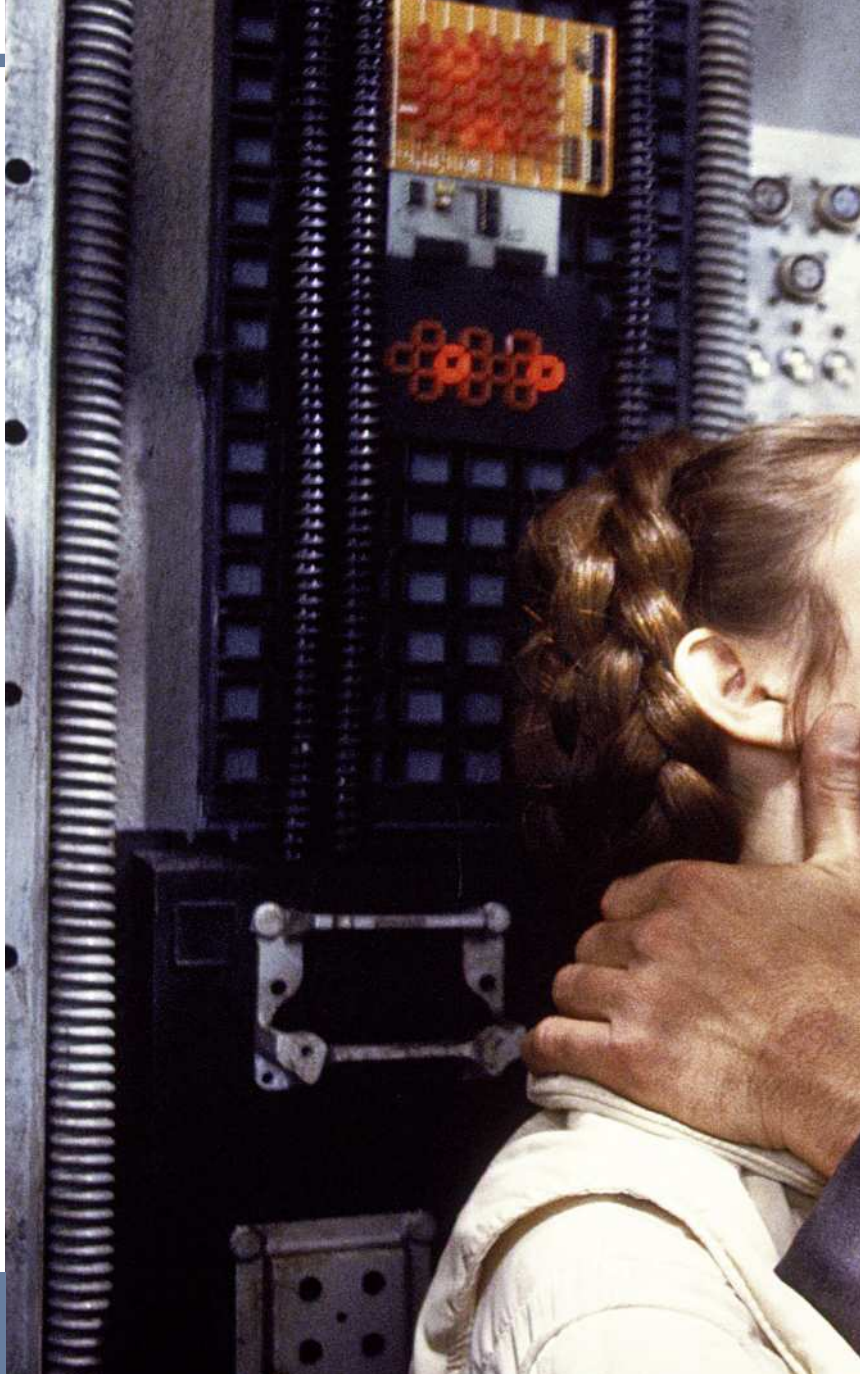
LOVE STORIES IN *STAR WARS* CAN GO VERY, VERY wrong – you just have to look at Anakin Skywalker's issues with sand to see that – but *The Empire Strikes Back* is the exception, the one place in that galaxy far, far away where romantic chemistry exists.

Early *Empire* scripts got embroiled in a Luke/Han/Leia love triangle – Luke and Leia being twins wasn't part of the story until work began on *Return Of The Jedi* – but thankfully the only element of that particular plotline to survive was that very awkward kiss on Hoth. Instead, Han and Leia spend half the movie sparring like a couple in a classic screwball comedy, until they surrender to the inevitable kiss. "A kiss in this film is almost equivalent to intercourse," Kershner joked on the Blu-ray commentary.

Han and Leia's arc culminates with the *second* most famous line in the movie, but it very nearly didn't happen. With Han about to be turned into a novelty work surface in Bespin's carbon freezing chamber, his reply to Leia's declaration of love was originally scripted as "I love you too." But Kershner was never happy with the response, so although he shot the scene as scripted, he worked with Harrison Ford to find an alternative. It was only on the last take that Ford ad-libbed a casual "I know," and history was made. Lucas was still sceptical and insisted on test screenings to find out what audiences preferred – we all know their answer...

Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher are never better in *Star Wars* than they are in *Empire*, but Kershner and the writers deserve just as much credit for Han and Leia's love story hitting the mark. Even Lucas would probably admit that, had he been writer and director, their relationship wouldn't have sizzled quite so much.

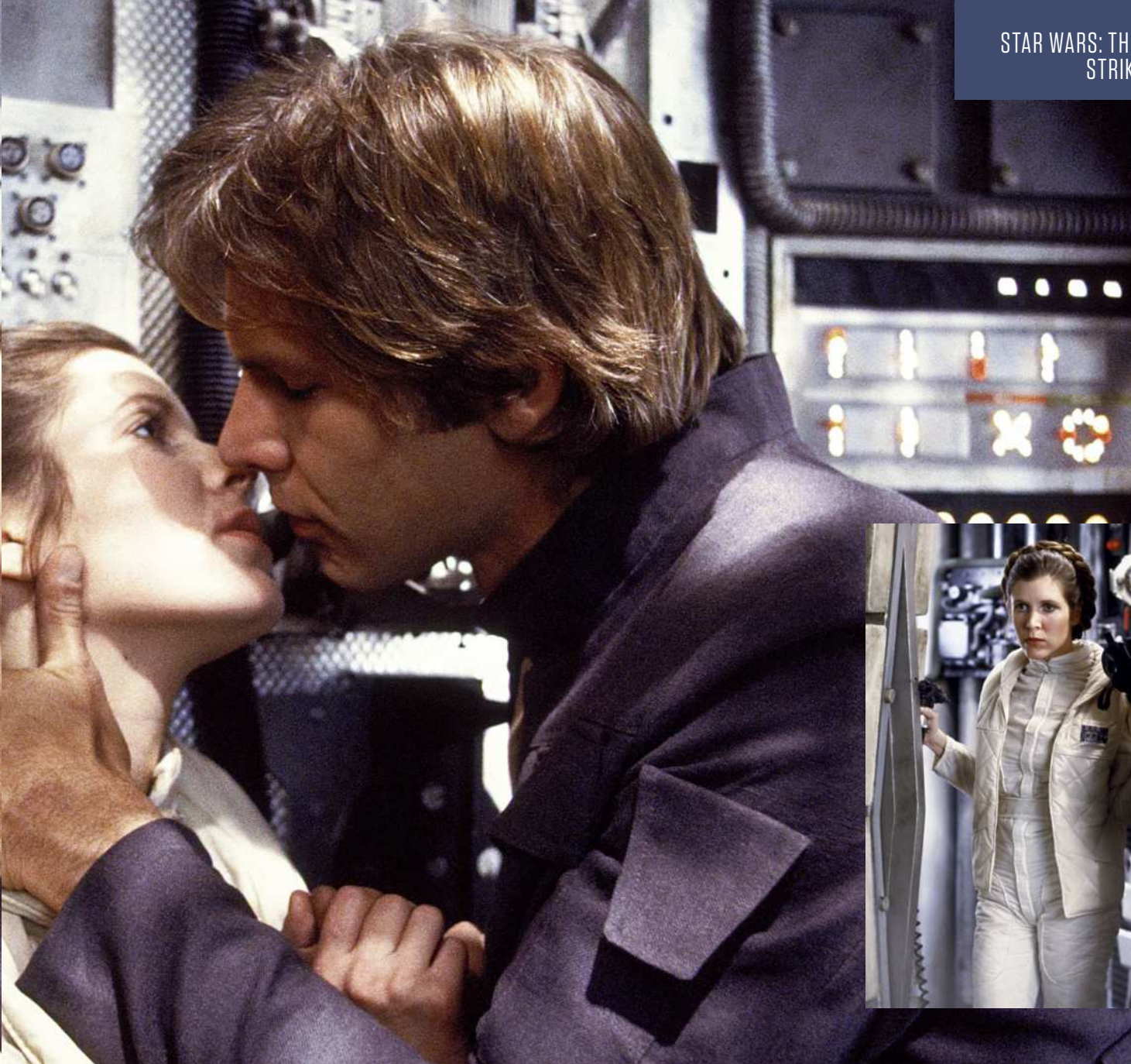
Generations of young boys felt a bit funny inside.



"...and if I do this, his head comes right off. Amazing."

Someone's got a bad feeling about something.





Leia wears
the Kozee
Kollection, \$24
from Walmart.



Novelty ice-
making trays
were big in
the '80s.



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V

DADDY ISSUES

“NO. I AM YOUR FATHER.”

WHILE *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* GOT ITS BIG action scenes out of the way early, there's no question it had saved its most powerful moment until last.

“When George told me at the beginning of our sessions that Darth was Luke's father, I thought, ‘Oh my god, that's wonderful,’” said writer Lawrence Kasdan. “Here was this wonderful fantasy that got back to some primal issues. Was my father a benevolent figure or was he an evil figure? Am I going to be like him? Was he once a better person? We were starting to build what isn't in the first film, that there's a person behind the mask, that Darth has been something else, and this yearning he has to enlist Luke is not just the bidding of the Emperor. It is an urge on his part to bring his son into the fold, so as soon as you're doing that it's really interesting.”

The revelation that Darth Vader is Luke Skywalker's dad was such a big deal that it didn't appear in the original script. Instead, the actor in the Darth Vader suit, Dave Prowse, was given dummy lines to keep the world off the scent – the “Obi-Wan killed your father” faux-bombshell found its way into British tabloids, so it was a canny move on Lucas's part.

Few on set knew the truth, with Kershner painstakingly choreographing Prowse's performance, and Hamill briefed at the last minute so he could react appropriately.

“I was very concerned about this ending, especially in terms of children and whether they'd be able to manage it,” admitted Lucas. “But I talked to a number of psychologists who basically said most kids, if it's too intense for them, will simply deny that it's true, they'll deny that he is his father, [think] he's just lying to him. My biggest concern about this ending was that it really wasn't an ending – the bad guys win and the good guys limp home wounded.”

Ironically, *Empire's* dark heart and unresolved cliffhanger were big reasons fans came to love it so much. With its cosmic teddy bears, Death Star assault redux, and happily-ever-after ending, *Return Of The Jedi* could never expect to have the same impact. *Star Wars* remains a powerful force in the universe, but there'll never be another film quite like *The Empire Strikes Back*. 🖖

The Empire Strikes Back is streaming on Disney+.



“No, Luke, I am the Green Cross Code man...”

Health and Safety would have a field day, frankly.



34 | ULTIMATE SCI-FI RETRO COLLECTION

“Hang on, where's the Frisbee gone?”





THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

**Bounty hunters? We do
need their scum**



Star Wars' first encounter with a bounty hunter didn't end too well – at least it didn't for Greedo, who found himself on the wrong end of Han Solo's blaster. But there's one scene in *The Empire Strikes Back* that guarantees iconic status for that most ignoble of professions.

Remarkably, the movie's iconic line-up of assassins appear together for less than a minute – not all of them in focus – but that was enough to fire the imaginations of a generation. The only things they have in common are their desire to collect Darth Vader's bounty on the Millennium Falcon, and that we knew practically nothing about them when they appeared on the Executor bridge.



There's IG-88, the assassin droid whose "cousin" IG-11 became one of the standout characters in *The Mandalorian*; the reptilian Bossk, revealed to be a long-term associate of Boba Fett in *The Clone Wars*; the human Dengar, who'd also crop up in *The Clone Wars* voiced by Simon Pegg; and 4-LOM and Zuckuss, a droid and an insectoid so interchangeable that toy manufacturer Kenner mixed up their names on the packaging for their action figures.

Having already cameoed in a cartoon segment of the *Star Wars Holiday Special*, Boba Fett was the star turn and – with a measly four lines of dialogue in *The Empire Strikes Back* – the undisputed chatterbox of the group.

Something about the Mandalorian stylings of his armour struck a chord with fans, however. "I remember the first time I walked onto the set that everyone just stopped what they were doing to gaze at the costume!" recalled Fett actor Jeremy Bulloch. "I went along to the studio and was dressed in the outfit which fitted perfectly. Even the boots were the right size!"

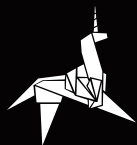


**If the boot fits,
become an
instant icon.**

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**Lightsabers
don't kill
people, special
effects do.**



BLADE RUNNER

WE REWIND THE CLOCK AND RETURN TO 2007,
WHEN **RIDLEY SCOTT** CHATTED TO SFX'S JOSEPH
MCCABE ABOUT HIS ENDURING NOIR CLASSIC

THOUGH PAINFUL TO ADMIT, THERE ARE, truth be told, precious few genuine masterpieces of cinematic science fiction. The reason is simple: sci-fi, at its core, deals with ideas, asking the great “what ifs?” ... What if mankind could travel to the stars? What if a mechanical being could develop human feelings? What if the world continues down the path it travels? The answers aren’t often easy to find in the flickering shadows of a movie house more suited to emotional affairs than matters of the mind. Every now and then, though, a science fiction film crosses the chasm between head and heart. One such film is *Blade Runner*, director Ridley Scott’s adaptation of Philip K Dick’s novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*.

Working from a script by Hampton Fancher and David Webb Peoples, Scott managed in *Blade Runner* to create a vision of the future so blazingly alive and original that the film’s title itself has become synonymous with the shock of the new. He was aided in no small measure by a first-rate crew and a cast headlined by the then red-hot Harrison Ford, playing Rick Deckard, a cynical cop who hunts androids (or ‘replicants’) pulled out of retirement to terminate four renegade ‘skin jobs’ led by imposing yet magnetic Roy Batty (played by Rutger Hauer in a career-defining performance).

Yet at the time of its release, *Blade Runner* went largely unappreciated by moviegoers grown used to equating sci-fi with the joyous fantasies of Lucas and Spielberg. According to Scott, part of the reason for the film’s box-office failure was that there were too many people calling the shots behind the scenes.

“At the time,” he recalls, “there was a lot of disappointment; I’d call it too many cooks. What I’ve learned in the movies is that there are frequently too many cooks. One of the hardest things to do is to get a director who’s got a combination of being assertive, sure, and has a vision. They’re very hard things to get in place. By the time I did *Blade Runner*, I’d done two-thousand commercials, won nine-thousand bloody awards in Venice and God knows what else. I thought I was pretty qualified. I think I probably got a reputation as being bad-tempered but I’m not at all.”





Is Rick a replicant?

Let's unearth a thirty-year-old argument

>> Philip K Dick toyed with the idea in his original novel, but Rick's humanity is tested and ultimately proven. In *Blade Runner*, things aren't so clear...

NO

Screenwriter Hampton Fancher wrote the script with Deckard being a human in mind. When asked by *The Telegraph* in 2017, he confirmed this, however, he prefers the film to be ambiguous.

YES

Ridley Scott himself believes Deckard to be a replicant and made changes to the film to spell it out. The unicorn daydream is the biggest signal of this. At the end of the film, Gaff leaves an origami unicorn for Deckard to find, revealing that he knows about Deckard's implanted memories.

NO

Harrison Ford has argued with Ridley Scott for decades that Deckard should be human, stating the audience deserved to have one human on-screen that they could have an emotional relationship with.

MAYBE!?

Blade Runner 2049 director Denis Villeneuve intended to keep the question open with his sequel. "I wanted to leave the ambiguity," he told *Yahoo Movies*. "I didn't want to tell the audience what to think."



Scott was inspired by Hong Kong and New York.

TOO MANY COOKS

Though the backseat drivers damaged the film's immediate box office, Scott still believes that, "Out of it, remarkably, is a film that still stands up. A lot like good wine – it gets better as it gets older. And it's like that because the film comes up almost like a novella. The way it's done, it's almost like a book. I think there's something in that because there's not a lot of action, but there's a lot of interplay between really great characters. I think the characters are what keeps everything really alive, and the unusual blow-by-blow organic engagement of one character to the next. It's about information dynamics. Real dynamics, I think, are about information, not about running, jumping, shooting people. That gets really boring... It all ties itself up, too. If you want to read, at the end of the film, the parallels to where we are today, then the parallels are there. It's all there if you want to get it."

Blade Runner's setting – a hellish Los Angeles of 2019 – proved integral to its present-day parallels.

"I'd travelled a lot up to that moment. I'd done a lot of Hong Kong, a lot of North Africa, a lot of Tunisia, a lot of London, a lot of New York. And one of the two places that were the most impressive was Hong Kong. When I was there, there were four-thousand junks in the harbour, and the crust of filth in the harbour was a foot thick. You fell in, you might as well stand there. It was

incredible. It was like an Asian medieval city. I always felt that's where I wanna make *Blade Runner*. But I had also been flying to New York, and New York at that moment was not the squeaky-clean New York that it is now. New York in the 1960's always seemed to be, 'How are they gonna clean the windows in this building?' So I thought it was a combination of both elements, and I thought, 'That's where the world is heading, really, into overkill. Where, at the end of the day, you haven't got enough people to clean the streets.'"

Despite the reputation his film eventually garnered, Scott was reluctant to revisit his masterwork for fear he'd find only his mistakes. He was finally coaxed into doing so by the team responsible for putting together the film's 25th anniversary edition, entitled *Blade Runner: The Final Cut*.



Rick goes through a gauntlet of punishment.

“It is a film that still stands up after 25 years – a lot like good wine”

“When they said, ‘You wanna do this?’ I said, ‘Yeah.’ I hadn’t seen it for a long time, actually about 12 years. It’s one of those films that I think was so special to me that I didn’t want to revisit it, just in case. Just in case I hated it, or just in case I thought, ‘Why did I do that?’ So it always sat on the shelf with me looking at it. So I said, ‘Let’s see a print.’ We dug out a print at Warner’s and ran it in a big theatre. And I was really happy, actually... elated, surprised.”

Scott’s delight in his work, however, didn’t blind him to flaws he felt could be polished in time for the film’s anniversary. “I thought,” he says, “Well, I can certainly get rid of most of them once and for all.”

A few such flaws were previously corrected for the film’s tenth anniversary, among them a tacked-on happy ending and sluggish narration by Ford that Scott added to alleviate any potential audience confusion.

“Deckard,” explains Scott, “is a dark cop who’s a bit of an alcoholic. He’s a nihilist who hates himself and hates his job. That sounds like Elmore Leonard to me; and therefore out of it should come a great voiceover. We couldn’t crack it. Harrison really tried, and I really tried, and I think the voice was becoming over-explanatory.”

Blade Runner was a pioneer for special and visual FX.



“Rick, you got an Aspirin? I have a splitting headache...”



We couldn’t quite get the words right so that Harrison felt comfortable. Voiceover is very tricky.”

NOT SET IN STONE

Removing the voiceover altogether was a quick fix in 1992, but left some scenes designed to accommodate it playing too slowly. *The Final Cut* saw Scott trimming some of these scenes, and digitally polishing others. “They’re more corrected things,” says Scott, “things that, at the time, we couldn’t do or we couldn’t afford or the technology wouldn’t allow us to do. Today you can do it in a heartbeat.” Scott’s aware that some *Blade Runner* fans may resent his tinkering with a film they’ve come to cherish, but he insists on an artist’s right to do what he sees fit with his creation. “I think you can do what you want. I mean, I’m a painter, and so I’ll finish a painting, and then I’ll put it to one side and I can’t see it. Then one morning, after a month, I’ll go back and suddenly look at it and think, ‘Uh, I’m not sure now,’ or, ‘It’s done.’ So my point is you always go back and touch the painting. You always look at it, and think, ‘Is it done, or is it not done?’ One of the biggest problems with painting is when you stop. Or drawing – to make a great drawing, you’ve got to stop.”

The prospect of returning to the *Blade Runner* universe was problematic for Scott, with two unrealised projects falling by the wayside amid licensing disputes with Philip K Dick’s source material. However, nearly three decades after *Blade Runner*’s first showing, things started to look up. Alcon obtained the rights and Scott was ready to assume the director’s chair once again for a long-awaited sequel. However, Scott ceded his directorial position to new sci-fi luminary Denis Villeneuve due to his existing commitment to *Alien Covenant* (2017). He stayed involved as executive producer, and the sequel, *Blade Runner 2049*, released in 2017.

Villeneuve’s film picks up three decades after the events of its predecessor and centres on Agent K (Ryan Gosling), a replicant Blade Runner, as he investigates the whereabouts of the child of Rick Deckard and Rachael. While far from a commercial success, critically, the film was deemed a worthy successor to Scott’s classic. Since then, Both Scott and Villeneuve have expressed a desire to return to the universe. Whether we see another title or not, *Blade Runner*’s impact casts a long shadow in sci-fi today, and it’s impossible to imagine cinema without it. Long may its legacy continue.

Rachael is played by a then-unknown Sean Young.

Hauer brings dignified tragedy to his role of Roy Batty.

Zhora is an assassin. The snake gives it away, right?

© ALAMY



ET THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

THIRTY YEARS AGO A HOMESICK ALIEN TOUCHED THE WORLD AND BECAME THE HIGHEST GROSSING MOVIE IN HISTORY. CALUM WADDELL LOOKS BACK AT THE ULTIMATE FEEL-GOOD SF FLICK...

PHOOOOOOOOONE HOME". For any child of the 1980s, it was a rite of passage to imitate the reassuringly friendly nasal growl of ET in the school playground. This, after all, was a pop culture phenomenon. An oddball alien who encouraged his own line of action figures, clothing and videogames.

En route to such success, *ET* managed to break box office records across the world – and, after the double-whammy of this and *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, the little guy secured Steven Spielberg's reputation as the most commercially proficient filmmaker of all time. Yes, this big-headed, bug-eyed otherworldly native somehow captured the hearts of just about everyone who saw it – an emotionally manipulative, but nonetheless beautifully executed, slice of tear-jerking cinema. Indeed, it was almost impossible not to be captivated by this deceptively slight tale of a little alien who takes refuge in the home of a middle-class, single parent, suburban family and bonds with a ten-year-old called Elliot.

Even imagining the most magical moments from the movie may instigate goose bumps among a certain generation, from Elliot and pals riding their bicycles into the sky to the sombre sight of ET struggling for life and captured by a group of government agents.

For Spielberg's ultimate slice of screen fantasy, a daring casting decision was made: no "name" actors would appear in the film in case they distracted from the sight of ET himself. Hence, with the plastic-fantastic extraterrestrial as the central focus of the feature, a number of young and old thespians were brought in to audition for the main roles. Of course, *ET* would introduce the world to future superstar Drew Barrymore, who plays Elliot's annoyingly cute little sister Gertie. Given the part of Elliot himself was a young

unknown called Henry Thomas. Cast as Mary, the mother of three, was Dee Wallace – an especially idiosyncratic choice given that the actress's previous credits were far removed from Spielbergian family fare.

"I was bouncing all over the place at that time," laughs Wallace when *SFX* caught up with her at a 30th anniversary screening of *ET* at the annual Sitges Film Festival. "I started my career as an actress very late in the day. I didn't go to New York and perform in theatre until I was 27 – and that was considered the way to get your break back then. However, thankfully, in little over five years I was working in TV. Then I did a religious movie called *All The King's Horses* and I had a diamond of a part in the great Blake



Spielberg had an imaginary friend who was an alien.

© ALAMY (2)

Henry Thomas

Whatever happened to young Elliot?

As a blockbuster-headlining child actor, ten-year-old Henry Thomas, on the back of *ET*, looked poised to hit the big time. Alas, early stardom never quite panned out that way – with subsequent roles including 1984's *Misunderstood* (nope, us neither) and the same year's action outing *Cloak And Dagger*. A comeback of sorts occurred with a turn as the young Norman Bates in 1990's warmly received television sequel *Psycho IV: The Beginning* and a stint opposite Brad Pitt in 1994's *Legends Of The Fall*. Thomas' career has entered a true 'golden age' thanks to his frequent collaboration with filmmaker and showrunner Mike Flannagan, appearing in several of his recent projects such as, *The Haunting Of Hill House*, *Doctor Sleep* (stepping into Jack Nicholson's shoes, no less, as Jack Torrence), *Midnight Mass* and *Gerald's Game*.

Now, the actor can now count his *ET* role as just one of his successes.



#NetflixFY



Edwards' sex comedy *10*. But my first leading role was in Wes Craven's *The Hills Have Eyes*. I got killed by a group of cannibals in that one [laughs]. And then I did the Joe Dante horror movie *The Howling*. So I was becoming known as a 'scream queen' but, to my surprise, I ended up auditioning for *ET*."

Indeed, despite being a familiar fixture of grindhouse gore-fests, Wallace was now thrown into an altogether more whimsical world. In her role as Mary, the actress gives a career-defining performance – aptly mediating the life of an overworked mother who cares for her children but never has time to raise them. In fact, so believable is Wallace's turn that it's a surprise to hear she didn't have any offspring of her own at home...

"I was not a mother at the time of doing *ET*," revealed the actress. "So I drew on my own mother who was actually very close to the character of Mary. She was always in a hurry – she worked all the time, worked very, very hard. I grew up in a very poor household and my father was not around a lot because he was an alcoholic. So Mary was someone that I felt I could relate to. Right from the start, I believed I could bring something personal to the role. But, to be honest, I actually think playing a mother is one of the easiest things an actress can do. I mean, look, if you have a dog then you are a mother [laughs]. Being a mother is all about unconditional love and protection. I think raising a pet requires motherly qualities."

PERFECT CAST

Wallace also maintains that working with the likes of Barrymore and Thomas was far from a struggle, giving two fingers to the old industry adage "an actor should never work with animals or children".

"I wouldn't have had a career if I didn't work with children or animals," she smiled. "I loved working with the kids in *ET* – Henry Thomas was really committed to that role, even at such a young age, and Drew Barrymore was adorable. The great thing about working with children is that they don't plan a lot of things out. So it can be quite spontaneous. They are always in the moment, which is also very helpful, but you never know how a scene is going to go. I like to work like that anyway so shooting *ET* was just a dream."

Naturally, as the star of the show, *ET* himself had to stand out. Called in to create the interplanetary critter was Italian make-up effects whiz Carlo Rambaldi, who had worked with the likes of Dario Argento in his home country before being pinched by Hollywood and obtaining an Academy Award for his achievements on Ridley Scott's *Alien*. Perhaps most important to his *ET* job, however, was his craftsmanship on Spielberg's previous sci-fi film *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*, for

That look when you don't know how to steer a bike in mid-air.

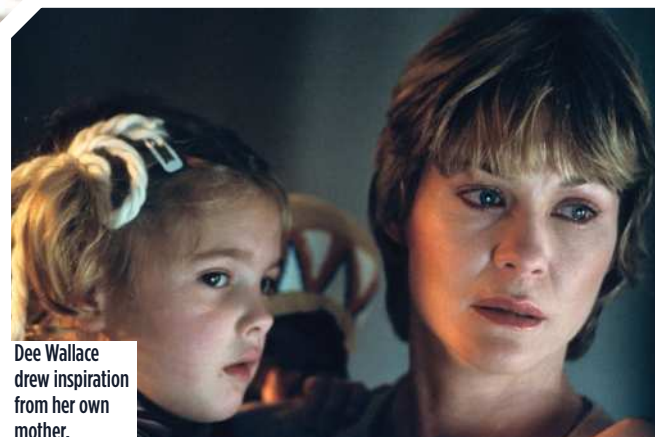


Carlo Rambaldi worked with Spielberg on *Close Encounters*.

which Rambaldi had assisted in the realisation of the space-visitor finale. Although Rambaldi would only work fleetingly in the industry after *ET*, his death in August 2012 served to remind the general public of his most famous accomplishment.

"Carlo was a beautiful man and I was so sad to hear about his passing," stated Wallace. "I mean, my god, he made the quintessential creature, didn't he? He made a being that seemed to have complete consciousness. You really did feel like you could communicate with that alien. It was so beautifully done. Of course, it was all latex and puppetry but you totally believed in him – and I don't just mean on the screen. When I was working with *ET* I would, just occasionally, become convinced that this thing was real [laughs]. It was magical how he brought him to life. I was so happy when he won another Oscar for *ET* – it was well deserved."

ET captured the imagination of almost everyone who went to see it. Held back from video release (a rarity in those days), the film which had knocked *Star Wars* off the "top grossing movie of all time" spot soon became the most pirated VHS cassette in history. It was said



Dee Wallace drew inspiration from her own mother.



The film's climax is sure to create some watery eyes.

“You really did feel like you could communicate with that alien”

to have brought Princess Diana to tears and won Spielberg the UN Peace Medal. It even managed, reputedly, to move then-American President Ronald Reagan. Indeed, to this day, *ET* continues to surface on lists of the “best films ever made” even if, when the Academy Awards came around, the movie would lose its Oscars to Richard Attenborough’s epic biopic *Gandhi* in both the Best Picture and Best Director categories.

“I think it still touches us because, at its most basic level, *ET* is the way that we want to be and the way that we want the world to be,” enthuses Wallace. “I believe that there is a real human truth in that film. As human beings, we are hungry for our hearts to open – we always want to feel connected to, and empathetic with, each other. We want to feel and believe that things can be better. *ET* told us that aliens are not here to destroy us and that can be interpreted in other ways – namely that, in reality, nobody is here to destroy us – the vast majority of us just want to live in peace. To accomplish that we have to keep our hearts open – and that was the message of Steven’s film. When you think about it, *ET* was the *Wizard Of Oz* for the 1980s. They both had similar messages about self-confidence and believing in your fellow human beings to do the right thing.”

THE DISAPPEARING GUNS

In 2002, to celebrate the film’s 20th anniversary, Spielberg unleashed a controversial new cut of *ET*, which included additional CGI effects à la the original *Star Wars* trilogy, and a frankly baffling scene (later spoofed in the ‘Free Hat’ episode of *South Park*) in which the police force’s guns have been digitally replaced by walkie-talkies. Although Spielberg would later admit that his decision was not necessarily the wisest of choices (affirming to his fans that he’d never again add CGI to any of his past work), Wallace is quick to spring to the director’s defence.

“The purists were always going to be judgemental,” she claimed. “But I think you need to contextualise the 20th anniversary edition. This was just after 9/11 and everybody was trying to be ultra responsible and not focus on terrorism and acts of violence. I think Steven, as he was a father himself by then, was especially conscious of that. It was his way of saying ‘I want to protect my children’. I think having the police poised with guns – as a group of children are going by on their bicycles... you know, I understand why he removed that. Of course, it’s not as if he erased the original *ET* from the face of the earth – it’s still out there and it’s now on Blu-ray. You have a choice as regards which version you want to watch.”

Surprisingly, though, one thing that *ET* never spawned was a sequel. Questioned about this Wallace admits that maybe – just maybe – some things should be left as they are.

“*ET* never belonged to anyone else except Melissa Mathison, who wrote the script, and Steven,” she affirms. “And I cannot imagine them wanting to follow that story up. It’s just perfect the way it is. What else can I say? It was probably the greatest family film that Disney never made.”

ET The Extra-Terrestrial is now available on Blu-ray from Universal Pictures.



Drew Barrymore's career shot off...

...while Henry Thomas won success later on.

© ALAMY (3); GETTY (3)



TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY

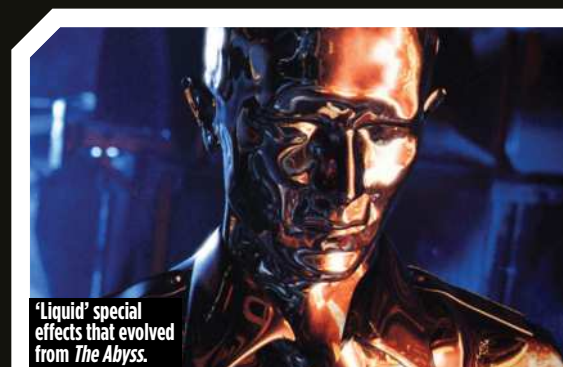
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AFTER THE MACHINES WERE SUPPOSED TO TAKE OVER, LUKE DORMEHL LOOKS BACK AT A FILM THAT CHANGED CINEMATIC EFFECTS FOREVER

THE SCRIPT FOR TERMINATOR 2 STATED THAT the end of the world as we know it would come about precisely on 29 August 1997. Were you to ask Mario Kassar and Peter Hoffman for their prediction in the early part of 1991, they may well have told you to bring it forward six years.

Kassar and Hoffman were movie execs at Carolco Pictures. One year earlier, the upstart production company had been flying high – throwing a party at the Cannes Film Festival with Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sly Stallone, Clint Eastwood, Oliver Stone and James Cameron (among others) that was so opulent that it is still talked about today. Carolco's previous blockbuster, Paul Verhoeven's *Total Recall*, had performed excellently at the box office, and all involved had been excited about making a follow-up to Cameron's 1984 low-budget sci-fi actioner, *The Terminator*. Then it all went wrong. Cameron, it turned out, was a renegade director; a mercurial artist who, it seemed, could feign producer-speak only as long as it took for him to get the money he needed to make his film, at which point he transformed into a different, altogether trickier, customer. Suddenly all of the stories Kassar and Hoffman had heard through the rumour mill ("Think of root canal and start from there," was how one Hollywood executive described working with the director) began to make sense. Only it was too late. And with the film's budget creeping ever closer to – and eventually surpassing – \$100 million, they were starting to panic.

"The big issue was that Carolco had given their bank one number that the movie was going to cost, but that wasn't the

number we had told them, and nor was that the number that they had agreed to with us," James Cameron's producer at the time, Larry Kusanoff, told *SFX*. "And the press promptly found out about it." Indeed, as would prove to be the case with every major Cameron production from this point on, the bottom line – which was the equivalent of almost four average film budgets at the time – was all anybody was interested in discussing. Not the groundbreaking special effects work. Not the fact that *T2*'s 13-year-old young lead, playing a youthful John Connor, had been plucked off the street with no



'Liquid' special effects that evolved from *The Abyss*.

© ALAMY (2)

prior acting experience (“It wasn’t something that I planned,” actor Edward Furlong would say later.) And not Cameron’s remarkable ability to shoot action scenes, the likes of which had never been seen before – and rarely seen since.

But although *Terminator 2* ultimately proved to be the most expensive film ever made at the time of its release, Cameron kept on shooting; secure in the knowledge that the movie he was making was turning out to be every bit as great as he imagined it. “A lot of directors need a lot of producers’ help,” said Kasanoff. “Jim is not one of them.”

SCHWARTZ AND ALL

“Arnold was phenomenal,” Kasanoff gushed. “He was so unbelievably great.” It is little exaggeration to say that Schwarzenegger, at the

time *Terminator 2* was released, was one of the biggest stars in the world. Twelve years before he made the move into politics, and despite his heavily accented English, he was a born orator, the kind of person whose charisma and force of personality alone were able to dazzle people into going along with him. “The first time that I met Arnold, *T2* had just been greenlit and we were in a meeting at TriStar [Pictures] to talk about it,” Kasanoff recalled. “He stood up in front of me and Jim [Cameron], the marketing and production VPs and the head of the studio, and gave a speech that just made you want to stand up and cheer. He said, ‘We did a good job on *Total Recall*, yes, but you have to wake up every morning and ask yourself what can we do to make this an even better movie. What can we do to make *Terminator 2* the greatest film of all time?’ At that moment I honestly believed that if this man was American-born he would be the President of the United States.”

Reprising his role as the Terminator (incidentally, check out the film’s specially-shot teaser trailer – directed by special effects guru Stan Winston on a budget of \$150,000 – which details the construction process of the T-800 model), *T2* acts as a neat bridge in Schwarzenegger’s career, bringing together the

“Cameron originally wanted to give Hamilton a prominent scar”

kind of tough guy Arnie-of-the-1980s with the kinder, gentler Arnie-of-the-1990s. “Here’s an example of how involved he was with every facet of production,” said Kasanoff. “One of the things I wanted to do was to put together a music video for the film, because back then if you could get a good music video it would get played 15 times a day on MTV. So I asked him whether he would do it, and he said, ‘Only if you get the best band in the world to do it.’ And I said, ‘Okay, who’s the best?’ And Arnold thought about it and came back to me and said, ‘If you get Guns N’ Roses I’m in.’ But to get them there was a lot of schmoozing with the band, and Arnold and Maria [Shriver] invited the band over to their house for dinner one night, and sure enough they agreed.”

WHAT WOULD SARAH CONNOR DO?

Also returning from the first film was Linda Hamilton, who once again portrayed Sarah Connor, in what was undoubtedly the biggest role of her career. Playing a stronger, more psychologically robust character than she did in the first *Terminator* (noting the irony that she begins the movie locked in a mental institution), in this all-action sequel Connor had matured into the arse-kicking, gear-shifting heroine that James Cameron scripts are made of. Originally Cameron wanted to underline this new harder edge to the character by giving her a prominent scar down one side of her face – even going so far as to do make-up tests – but ditched the idea when he realised how complex it would be to recreate the special effect each day of production. “I really wanted her to look like Tom Berenger in *Platoon*,” Cameron said. “And Linda was up for it, because the last thing she had done was playing Beauty in *Beauty And The Beast* for three years.”

Although she narrates the film’s opening and closing monologue, what is most notable about Sarah Connor’s part in *T2* is just how surplus she is to requirements. The leading women in James Cameron’s movies are generally maternal figures; a characteristic shared by Ellen Ripley – Cameron’s previous screen heroine in *Aliens* – and Connor in the *Terminator* films. In *T2*, however, Arnie himself plays the nurturing protector; his role as surrogate mother underlined by the figurative castration that is his inability to use his gun to its full lethal potential.

And neither is Connor needed to ramp up the gender appeal of the movie. While movie bosses of the 1990s probably liked the idea of a kick-ass woman on the poster to help sell tickets (and Cameron – the person – himself obviously had an affection for Linda Hamilton, since the two got married a few years later), Cameron – the director – has only ever had eyes for high



Sarah Connor becomes a full-on gun-toting action hero for the sequel.



For *T2*, Arnie’s T-800 was the protector and not the assassin.



CGI was the show-stealer but the practical FX are still remarkable.



Gun crazy in the best of the Terminator movies.

technology. The appeal in *T2* is in the oozing 3D graphics of the liquid metal of the T-1000 and the fetishistic detail with which Cameron renders his favourite big vehicles (from the shooting script: "The Kenworth tow-truck ... is all muscle, tearing along the canal like a train in a tunnel. Its big tires send up huge sheets of muddy spray, backlit in the setting sun").

Who needs action stars when you've got a big Kenworth tow-truck, eh?

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

If *T2* had a long-term cinematic impact there can be little argument that it came from the film's pioneering use of computer graphics. Cameron had toyed with using CGI provided by George Lucas's Industrial Light & Magic visual effects company on his previous film – 1989's *The Abyss* (in which every effect had to fit into 900MB of online storage) – but *T2*'s pre and post-apocalyptic environment stretched the boundaries of what was possible to achieve with the effects of the day. Most notably, of course, was the "nanomorph mimetic poly-alloy" T-1000 Terminator (played in eminently creepy human form by actor Robert Patrick).



Terminator 2 was hot property alright.

"The concept of the liquid metal man was an idea that I had had a good ten years earlier when I was conceptualising the first film," Cameron has said. "There was no way to do it – Claymation was the only thing I could think of back in the early 1980s and I didn't think that was going to be mind-blowing enough. So when we got to [*Terminator 2*] the residue of that early idea was still floating around, but in the meantime we had done *The Abyss* so there was some proof of concept that some kind of liquid character could actually be done. That ultimately became the T-1000."

"You've got to understand the morphing effects, which two years later were ubiquitous, had never really been done," Kananoff said. "The pressure on Jim to make sure that that was going to work was intense. People in Hollywood have a tendency to be sycophants as well – and to say what they think Jim wanted to hear, when he asked whether a particular effect worked or not – but obviously that's not going to help once the film comes out. But thank god it all worked out in the end. And I think it changed the way that movies are made forever."

T2 Triv

Stuff you should know

>> According to a deleted scene featuring the T-1000, the liquid metal Terminator cannot see – it "samples" the molecular structure of objects by touch.

>> Since John Connor was born on 28 February 1985, and is ten years old when *T2* takes place, the film is set in 1995 – although certain aspects of the script suggest 1994. The future scenes, showing the fall of Skynet, take place on 11 July 2029.

>> The sound of the T-1000 walking through the metal bars was created by holding a can of open dog food upside down and recording the sound of the closely-packed food slowly oozing out.

>> The abilities of the T-800 (the Schwarzenegger model) include calculating the distance of objects; analysing body structure, textures and temperatures; doing kinetic studies of trajectories; sampling and analysing the atmosphere; calculating gravity; and imitating human speech. It also has modern smartphones beaten – its power cell gives it 120 years of charge.

>> The Cyberdyne building in the film is a real location in Fremont, a suburb of San Jose. Currently it is home to Mattson Technology. Additional floors were added for the movie so that James Cameron could blow them up.





ESSENTIAL RETRO SCI-FI TELEVISION SERIES

TV – THE SMALL SCREEN FRONTIER. THESE ARE THE VOYAGES OF THE RETRO SHOWS THAT ALL SCI-FI AFICIONADOS MUST WATCH

WORDS: DAVE GOLDER

TELEVISION SCI-FI CAN BE ROUGHLY divided into two eras: BC and AD. As in 'Before CGI' and 'Anno Digital'.

For much of the 20th century, TV sci-fi had a reputation as the poor cousin of film sci-fi – all washing-up bottle spaceships, wobbly sets and shuffling monsters.

Certainly, early shows like *Captain Video* and *His Video Rangers* (1949) were unashamed kiddy fare. On the other hand, the first SF show broadcast in the UK was the BBC's *R.U.R.*

(1938) a highbrow adaptation of the Czech play that introduced the word 'robot' to the world.

While TV struggled with production values, it was the medium where ideas thrived. So when TV sci-fi grasped the opportunities CG offered in the 1990s, the shows didn't just start to catch up with their big-screen rivals in terms of spectacle, they outmatched them in storytelling and complexity. So if you want to brush up on your classics, here are the shows that had the greatest impact.

FIREFLY

The shiniest western in space

2002

Sci-fi westerns were nothing new when *Firefly* came out. *Star Trek* had been described as “Wagon Train to the stars” while films like *Outland* (1981) and *Battle Beyond the Stars* (1980) respectively transferred *High Noon* (1952) and *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) into space.

But *Firefly* felt fresh and, to use one of the show’s catchphrases, shiny. Best of all, it featured a crew of characters who were instantly lovable, charming and resourceful. A lot like the Scooby Gang from creator Joss Whedon’s previous success, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Set among a bunch of frontier worlds established by an alliance of Earth’s only two surviving superpowers – China and the US – the show follows the misadventures of the crew of a *Firefly*-class ship called *Serenity*. They’re a motley bunch – including a pastor, a doctor and his mysterious sister, and a ‘companion’ (a kind of professional courtesan) who gives the ship a degree of respectability. And it really needs that

“Smugglers? US? What in the gorram hell gave you that idea?”

veneer of respectability because many of the ship’s missions are on the distinctly dodgy side.

It’s a deceptively simple setup, but the worldbuilding is full of well-observed detail, including the Mandarin phrases, and a backstory about the fallout of a civil war. It was witty, inventive, and all over way too soon after 14 glorious episodes and a movie.

Must-see episode: Out Of Gas



We’ll keep holding out a vague hope for a continuation.

BABYLON 5

Sci-Fi’s Lord of the Rings

1994-1998

A sprawling space opera about the last hope for peace in a fractious empire, *Babylon 5* was a cult hit, adored by hardcore SF fans and ignored by everyone else, but its subsequent impact on TV science fiction has been considerable.

Babylon 5 was the show that made every other sci-fi show want a plot arc. This was the first genre show to structure itself as a TV novel; an ongoing story spread across five seasons that owed much to epic fantasy book series.

Created by J Michael Straczynski, *Babylon 5* was rich in worldbuilding. Set aboard a station that served as a melting pot for alien races, it was also notable as the first TV show to create its special FX purely through CGI. The results may look a little primitive today but at the time they gave the show ambition rarely seen before on TV.

Must-see episode: Severed Dreams



And the award for the strangest workplace photo goes to...

THUNDERBIRDS

Futuristic hardware to the rescue

1965-1966

“Five... Four... Three... Two... One... Thunderbirds are go!” That famous opening narration gave children of the 1960s (and their parents) a weekly promise of some amazing action to come.

Thunderbirds was one of several puppet shows (or ‘Supermarionation!’ shows as the credits proudly announced in a brazenly blocky font) produced by Gerry Anderson. They included *Supercar* (1961), *Stingray* (1964) and *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons* (1967), but *Thunderbirds* was his masterpiece.

International Rescue is a secretive life-saving organisation operating out of a Pacific Island, which uses specially designed rescue craft that can be deployed to global disasters. These include a first responder jet (Thunderbird 1), a flying

aircraft carrier for transporting further equipment (Thunderbird 2), a space rocket (Thunderbird 3), a submarine (Thunderbird 4) and a space station co-ordinating the action (Thunderbird 5).

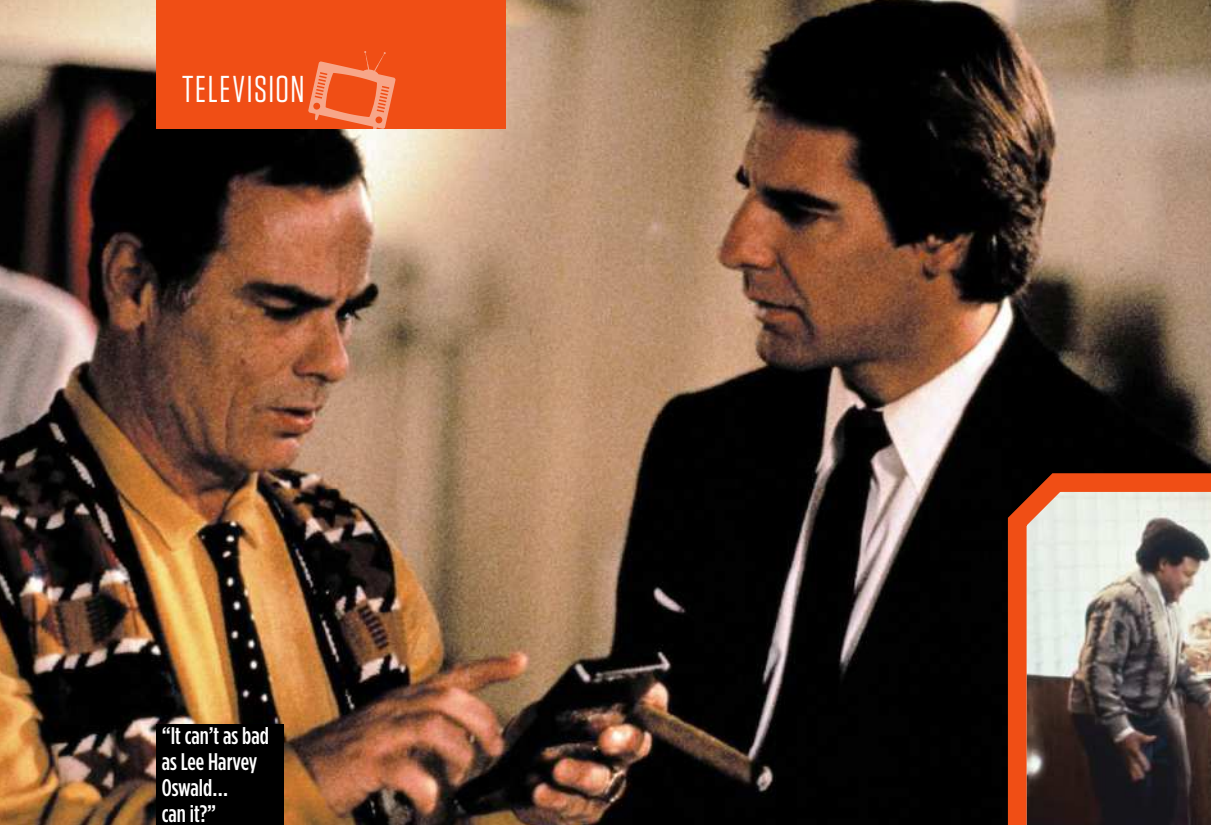
It’s a show about the hardware, and the model and miniature sets are simply awesome. It’s also about weekly gimmicks, with Thunderbirds 1, 2 and 3 having almost ritualistic launch procedures. But more than any other Anderson series it’s a show about characters, with the puppets here having a personality, humour and charm that adds to the show. Lady Penelope and her butler Parker are bonafide sci-fi icons.

Must-see episode: Attack of the Alligators

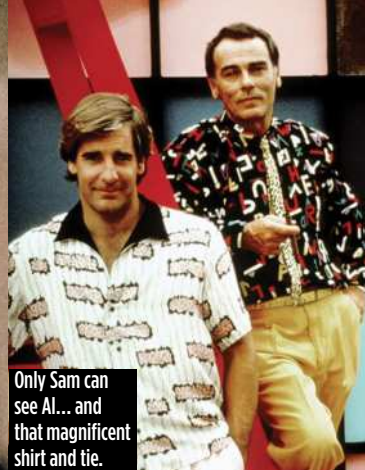


Thunderbird 2 was so goddamn cool. Just look at it!

© ALAMY (8)



"It can't as bad as Lee Harvey Oswald... can it?"



Only Sam can see Al... and that magnificent shirt and tie.



Quantum Leap gave Bakula a healthy scope of roles to fill.

QUANTUM LEAP Time travel with social conscience

1989-1993

Long before 'woke' became a buzzword, *Quantum Leap* was the most socially conscious, bleeding-heart liberal science fiction show the US had ever produced, and proud of it. This was a time travel show with a difference. Actually, a whole load of differences. Sam Beckett (Scott Bakula) is a scientist whose consciousness becomes lost in time. He 'leaps' into the bodies of different people each week – always someone alive in the span of his own lifetime.

Sam then lives their life until he manages to right some wrong that's happened, and then off he leaps into another body for the next episode.

To help him work out what wrong he has to right, he's accompanied by the hologram of a colleague, Al (hilariously played by Dean Stockwell) who only Sam can see, and who has access to a supercomputer that gives clues about how Sam's actions are affecting the timeline.

It's a rather unwieldy setup, but try not to think about the details and just enjoy a show that has a lot of fun having its lead man play everything from astronauts, pop stars and pilots to emancipated women, chimps and amputees. And the heartwarming tales it tells are a symphony of diversity, inclusivity and a call for

understanding. Sam fights for racial equality and gender equality. He has to deal with prejudice against mental and physical disabilities. And he often has to wear dresses and high heels.

Sure, there's an element of the white saviour here, but the show's earnest little morality plays are always so good-natured and endearingly optimistic you want to ruffle its hair for at least trying. And sometimes, when it started experimenting with its format, it produced some truly great sci-fi as well.

Must-see episode: Shock Theatre



Six wears a classic jaded 'get me out of here' stare.

THE PRISONER Trapped in 1960s trippiness

1967

Winston Churchill once said, "It's a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma." He was actually talking about Russia, but he's also perfectly describing *The Prisoner*. Which may well have been about a British spy defecting to Russia. Equally, it may have been about a spy refusing to give up his recipe for Wonton soup.

The Prisoner is one of the most forensically scrutinised, analysed, and probed series in TV history. Yet its mysteries remain as inscrutable now as they did in the 1960s.

The brainchild of star Patrick McGeehan, *The Prisoner's* setup is deceptively simple. A spy hands in his resignation, but is then kidnapped by men in top hats and taken to an inescapable village where all the inhabitants have numbers instead of names. The guards are large, white balloons called Rovers and everyone's dressed like it's the local yachting club jamboree. The spy is made Number Six, and in each episode, a

succession of Number Twos (no sniggering) try methods of increasingly bizarre interrogation to get him to reveal why he resigned.

But Number Six will not break. Each week in the opening narration he defiantly cries, "I am not a number. I am a free man!" In the same narration, he also demands, "Who is Number One?" It's debatable whether we ever find out.

It's weird. It's trippy. It's utterly bonkers. And it's very hip and groovy in the best possible 1960s way when it comes to the way it's shot and edited. All of which makes it totally unmissable. Just don't expect any answers. After 17 episodes – the penultimate of which was so intense to film it gave guest star Leo McKern a nervous breakdown – you'll probably be less sure you know what the show's about than you did at the beginning.

Must-see episode: The Chimes of Big Ben

Cartoon Heroes

The best small-screen superhero action was often animated

Before the 21st century, live-action superhero TV shows were rarely classics of sci-fi. Budget constraints limited *The Incredible Hulk* to two (and eventually one) Hulk-outs an episode while flying superheroes were pretty much a no-go. The 1970s *Wonder Woman* and *Spider-Man* series were quaint, but nothing like the comics.

Instead, true comic book action could be often found in cartoon form, and some of those animated series became classics in their own right.



Superman (1941)

From Fleischer Studios, this is the earliest example and looks simply gorgeous. With art-deco backdrops and a rich colour pallet, they featured Superman in a world of pulp sci-fi delights: robots, lasers, and giant monsters.



X-Men: The Animated Series (1992-1997)

This series delighted comic book fans by being such a faithful version of the source material, even adapting many celebrated comic book storylines. It was also one of the first 'children' cartoons to feature more mature, serialised storytelling.



Batman: The Animated Series (1992-1999)

Boasting an appealing art style, with a suitably moody colour pallet, *Batman* also had some terrifically lean, mean storytelling that breathed new life into the Dark Knight's rogues' gallery, including Mark Hamill voicing the Joker.



The twisty endings were dark and delightful.

THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Dare you enter?

1959-1964

The Twilight Zone was one of two great US sci-fi anthology series in the mid-20th century, though it tended to stray into supernatural horror more than its rival, *The Outer Limits*.

The show was the creation of Rod Serling, who popped up each episode to inform us we were entering 'the Twilight Zone'. He scripted many of the episodes, too. One of its most celebrated instalments, 'To Serve Man', has friendly aliens arriving on Earth, with a secret agenda that's revealed in a wonderfully lurid twist which has become the stuff of TV legend.

Must-see episode: To Serve Man



Outer Limits had a cosy classic sci-fi feel to it in some episodes.

Trent has to recover his fingers to reveal the truth.



BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

Enjoy the Cylons

2003-2009

The original *Battlestar Galactica* (1978) was an unashamed small-screen *Star Wars* rip-off, though a thoroughly entertaining one, with some great robot baddies in the Cylons. The remake, though, was another level. Showrunner Ronald D Moore infused the space opera with political drama, religious debate and social satire. A subplot about Cylons disguising themselves as humans added a whole extra dimension of suspense.

Audiences, critics and even US politicians adored it. This was a properly recognised, acclaimed drama that just happened to be science fiction. The finale, which leaned heavily on the show's religious aspects, wasn't to everyone's tastes, but it did little to dent the show's reputation.

Must-see episode: Exodus



Is there a Cylon in this picture? We'll tell you: it's [redacted].

THE OUTER LIMITS

The quintessential SF anthology show

1963-1965

The 1960s' other great anthology series, *The Outer Limits*, seized control of your television set every week ("Do not attempt to adjust the picture!" the opening narration warned us) to deliver chilling SF tales.

Early episodes leaned heavily on crazy monsters (insects with human faces! Mutant fish! Huge-headed aliens!) but by season two, the show found its feet and began to veer into more hardcore science fiction stories.

Its most famous episode was 'Demon With a Glass Hand', written by Harlan Ellison, which was an inspiration for *The Terminator* – though Ellison had to go to court to get director James Cameron to give him a credit for the film.

Must-see episode: Demon with a Glass Hand

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DOCTOR WHO (CLASSIC)

Time travel is always a-changin'

1963-1989

When is a sci-fi anthology show not a sci-fi anthology show? When it's *Doctor Who*. Well classic *Doctor Who*, anyway.

Launched in 1963, *Doctor Who* told the weekly adventures of an eccentric traveller in time and space called the Doctor, a Time Lord whose ship is a police box that's bigger on the inside than the outside. The original series ran until 1989 with various changes of lead actor – the Doctor has a TV-handy knack for body regeneration, y'see.

When the show returned in 2005, it was not a reboot or a remake, but – to the surprise of many – a simple continuation. But in many other ways it was a very different show, and not just in terms of production values. The classic series was rarely about the Doctor and was rarely about time travel. The Doctor and his flying police box spaceship, the TARDIS, were merely a means to travelling from adventure to adventure – sometimes in deep space, sometimes in history.

So the show was almost an anthology, except that unlike, say, *The Twilight Zone*, it had a regular cast (the Doctor invariably had companions who came along for the ride) and the adventures took place over multiple episodes.

The classic series may have been a little cheap and cheerful but it buzzed with invention, wit

The quaint costumes and sets are all part of the charm.



and great iconic monsters – Daleks, Cybermen, Ice Warriors, Yeti. There were periods of gothic horror, periods of Earth invasions, periods of weirdness and periods of bizarre humour (Douglas Adams script-edited for a while). Kids hid behind the sofa to watch it, but at the same time, they were getting a superlative introduction to a huge range of sci-fi concepts.

The new show is a different beast full of timey-wimeyness and modern stories that often dive headfirst into Time Lord mythology. But *Doctor Who* – classic or revival – remains a unique show in terms of its variety of settings and its ability to reinvent itself.

Must-see episode: Genesis of the Daleks



The Doctor had many recurring nemeses, like the Master.

THE X-FILES An alien conspiracy epic

1993-2002 (2018)

The X-Files was almost like culture shock for science fiction fans in the mid-1990s. They were used to a certain look and style for their TV fodder. Sure, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* had proved that science fiction wasn't just for kids, but it still *looked* like a science fiction show, and not just in terms of the sci-fi trappings, but in the way it was shot, lit and even acted – it wasn't going to win over genre sceptics.

But *The X-Files* looked like a proper, hard-nosed procedural show. It was dark and gritty. It had everyday characters. It felt real. It just happened to feature monsters, aliens and UFOs too. You didn't need to be a sci-fi fan to love this.

The show was also at the forefront of a wave of enthusiasm for conspiracy theories, which helped. Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) was the CIA agent who wanted to believe in the bizarre cases he was investigating, while Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) was his sceptical partner, always looking for rational explanations for all the strangeness.

It was perfect casting, and their feisty partnership sparked with good-humoured bickering that helped define the show. Their respect for one another – even though they rarely

agreed – became ever more important as shadowy forces in the backplot pulled Mulder and Scully into a seasons-spanning conspiracy arc involving UFO abduction, alien oil and shady agents with improbable code names (Cigarette Smoking Man, indeed!).

But while showrunner Chris Carter's mythology episodes became the show's focus it was often the more inventive, bizarre and funny

standalone episodes by other writers that really impressed. Take, 'Bad Blood' for example, a vampire tale told from both Mulder's and Scully's points of view, each with very different slants. Or 'The Post-Modern Prometheus', a *Frankenstein* homage featuring a deformed genetic mutant bobbing along to Cher.

Must-see episode: Bad Blood

One sees an alien spacecraft, the other sees a plate on string.



"Captain, are you sure you got the Green Cross Code right?"

Captain's duties include, erm, 'tribble cleanup'.

STAR TREK: THE ORIGINAL SERIES Boldly redefining TV sci-fi

1966-1969

Star Trek's original five-year mission only lasted three seasons on-screen, but it left a legacy that's endured far longer and will probably continue to do so for a long time to come.

But who would have predicted what a franchise leviathan *Star Trek* would become when fans were engaged in a letter-writing campaign to save the show from cancellation back in the late 1960s? Over four decades, 13 films and ten spin-off series (maybe more depending on how you're counting), *Star Trek* seems to be in ruder health than ever before.

All of which stems from that original series, a true game-changing classic of the genre. You

might have another favourite *Trek* – certainly, *The Next Generation* (1987-1994) and *Deep Space Nine* (1993-1999) both refined and added crucial elements to the franchise – but you wouldn't have them without the original series.

Creator Gene Roddenberry had a strong vision for a sci-fi series with a solid moral core. It took a military approach to space exploration, but from a Federation that has attained peace, abandoned the need for money and strives to represent all that's good about humanity. His crew, on the Starship Enterprise, would seek out new life and new civilisations, without assuming that all alien life wants to kill them. Ironically, it usually did,

but Captain Kirk (William Shatner) and his crew would always try to at least *understand* what was causing the alien's angst.

All of which sounds very grand, but actually, *Star Trek* was mostly a fun action show, with lots of fisticuffs, snogging and a huge array of cool SF gimmicks: warp speed; the emotionless Mr Spock (Leonard Nimoy) with his pointy ears; transporters; phasers; communicators; photon torpedoes; and, of course, a lot of monsters.

But that moral underpinning was always present, as Roddenberry tried to paint a universe of tolerance and diversity. Famously *Star Trek* featured prime-time US television's first interracial kiss, between Kirk and the Enterprise's communications officer Uhura (Nichelle Nichols).

The show did become a little silly in its third year, which opened with an episode in which aliens remove Spock's brain and later features a reenactment of the shoot-out at the OK Corral. But earlier episodes like the tear-jerking time travel tale 'The City at the Edge of Forever' are examples of retro small-screen sci-fi at its height.

Must-see episode: The City on the Edge of Forever

© ALAMY (7)



Let's be honest, pretty much everyone can hear this image.

The Enterprise crew meeting the actual Apollo there.





BACK IN



THE ZONE

YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER
ANOTHER DIMENSION. A
DIMENSION NOT ONLY OF SIGHT
AND SOUND BUT OF MIND...
STEVE O'BRIEN LOOKS BACK AT
ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL
SCI-FI SHOWS OF ALL TIME...

IT'S A DAUNTING PROSPECT FOR ANY WRITER TO take on the mantle of being the new Rod Serling. That's why when Jordan Peele, the Oscar-winning writer and director of *Get Out* and *Us*, was first offered the job of bringing back the late writer's most iconic series, he turned it down flat. "I was terrified," Peele told *Variety* in an interview in 2018. "Why would I ever jump into the most established, pristine shoes in all of the genre?"

A few months later, Simon Kinberg, who, for some years had been attached to a mooted *Twilight Zone* revival at CBS, called Peele. The two promptly hooked up, only to geek out over their love of Rod Serling's brilliant, clever and passionately political anthology series. By the end of the meeting, Peele's mind was changed.

"The realisation, for me, was that it was an opportunity to attempt to continue with Serling's mission," Peele went on to say. "If we approach it without ego and sort of bow to Serling, that will hopefully suffice for our fellow *Twilight Zone* fans but also bring back a show that I think is needed right now. Because it's a show that has always helped us look at ourselves, hold a mirror up to society."



IN ROD WE TRUST

Though *The Twilight Zone* has been resuscitated twice since the original series bowed out on 19 June 1964, it's those first five seasons, masterminded by the greatest television writer of his generation, that remain the reason this quietly subversive anthology show is held in such stellar regard.

We're used now to the idea of writers being in charge of TV shows. But the word 'showrunner' wasn't even a thing back then. Television wasn't considered a writer's medium, it was the producers who were in charge – when *The Invaders* shouted in its title sequence of being 'A Quinn Martin Production', it wasn't because Quinn Martin was the show's writer. But it wasn't like that with *The Twilight Zone*, which is perhaps the main reason why, unlike so many of its cookie-cutter contemporaries, it's endured.

Rod Serling would pen 92 of the 156 episodes of *The Twilight Zone* between 1959 and 1964. But it wasn't just his name that the telly viewing public came to recognise. Serling himself would present each episode, in voice only for the first series, and on camera for the rest. There he would stand each week, introducing the characters we were about to follow in his tailored black suit and an ever-present cigarette hanging from his fingers, his silky, solacing voice promising to take us on a journey "into a wondrous land whose boundaries are that of imagination".

He appeared so amiable, so gentle, that no one would ever guess what a firebrand he really was. In his early years, he'd been a boxer, but his more lasting bruises had come later, battling it out with lily-livered TV networks and culture-phobic corporate sponsors.

Serling was a radical working in a medium dogged, at the time, by a stifling conservatism. But by 1959, he was tired of butting heads with his paymasters. Once he was forbidden from referencing the Holocaust because a gas company sponsored the show he was working on. "I got tired of battling," he said in 1959. "You always have to compromise your script, lest somebody – a sponsor, a pressure group, a network censor – gets upset. The result is, you begin to skirt the issues."

From that point on, Serling stated that he would purposely dodge the issues. His days as an angry young man were over, he declared categorically. This would be the new, mellower Rod Serling, he reassured CBS when pitching *The Twilight Zone*.

Don't believe a word of it.

CAMPFIRE STORIES

The Twilight Zone was every bit as politically charged and socially aware as his previous work, only camouflaged this time by its sci-fi and fantasy trappings. This was Serling's way

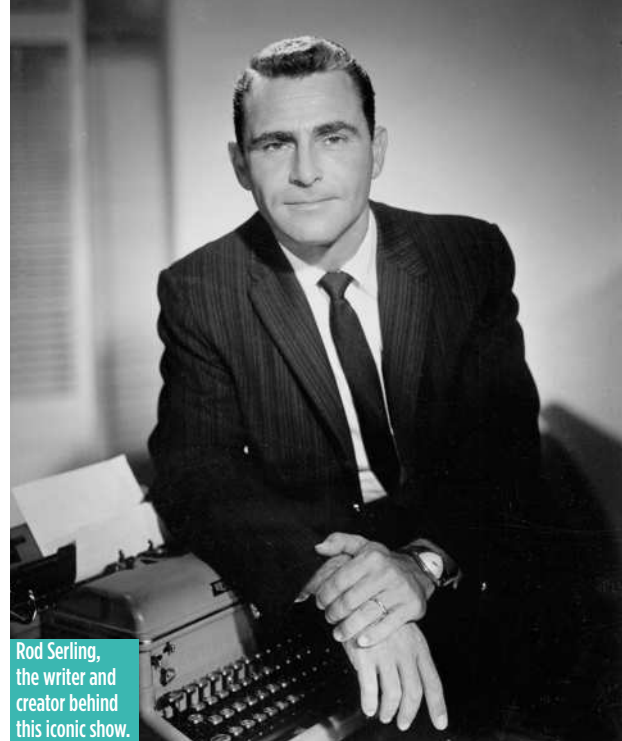
of sneaking brain-chewing entertainment past a thick-skulled network and directly into people's homes. Without compromising his principles, Serling was suddenly the most free he had ever been.

The Twilight Zone was a show that bigged up the little man in society. If the series had any direct influences, its largest debt was probably to the movies of Frank Capra. Though Capra made only one fantasy-dyed flick – *It's A Wonderful Life* – it was the liberal and humanistic morality his movies espoused that were woven in the fabric of *The Twilight Zone*. From Burgess Meredith's meek myope in 'Time Enough At Last' to William Shatner's neurotic airplane passenger in 'Nightmare At 20,000 Feet' to Billy Mumy's kid-god from the suburbs in 'It's A Good Life', these were stories of ordinary folk, the everyman and everywoman, dropped into fantastical situations.

"*The Twilight Zone* would take things they were concerned about in the present moment and crank them up," *Black Mirror* showrunner Charlie Brooker told *SFX* in 2013. "It would present these irresistible, 'What if' ideas, and then play them out in a way that when it would hit the right height was really chilling. And those episodes are still equally chilling today – if not more so, because you get the added 'archive assist', where it becomes slightly creepier just by nature of the fact that it's 60 years old. They were like good little campfire stories, and TV doesn't do that very often."

Ratings were initially low, but word of mouth spread and the critics began to notice this strange little anthology show. Gradually, the ratings rose as Serling unveiled stories of a hitch-hiking Grim Reaper ('The Hitch-Hiker'), suburban paranoia over a suspected alien invasion ('The Monsters Are Due On Maple Street'), hapless Guardian Angels ('Mr Bevis') and a robot baseball pitcher ('The Mighty Casey'), among other stories of the fantastic. Each episode delved deep into human emotion – the fears, the joys, the triumphs and the downfalls of everyday living.

"We must not forget that Rod Serling was a playwright," *Twilight Zone* writer George Clayton Johnson told *SFX* in 2009. "He was writing for the stage, and then along came this new phenomenon, television, and why not write stage plays for the television camera? What he was



Rod Serling, the writer and creator behind this iconic show.



Burgess Meredith (left) and director John Brahm in 'Time Enough At Last'.

Richard Kiel plays an alien with a confusingly named cookbook in 'To Serve Man'.





Beauty norms are challenged in 1962 episode 'The Eye Of The Beholder'.



interested in was basically the idea that we're writing a realistic story in every detail, except for one touch of the imaginary, one touch of odd, strange, disconcerting. But everything else is perfectly as it is in real life."

Serling's Trojan horse of radicalism became a popular hit from the beginning of its second year, but *The Twilight Zone's* production was always to be troubled. During its second season, General Foods ceased its sponsorship and Colgate-Palmolive and Chesterfield cigarettes came and went. Over the show's television life, sponsors entered and exited on a revolving door basis, panicking network execs and pushing Serling into ever-greater anxiety.

With no sponsor forthcoming for its planned 1961 series, *The Twilight Zone* was axed after its third season. Serling, who felt he'd been running on low gas for much of season three, left to teach at Antioch College in Ohio. But it swiftly transpired that *The Twilight Zone's* replacement on CBS schedules was a ratings bomb, and soon the network's suits were mulling over the return of Serling's anthology series.

To generate more advertising revenue, CBS planned to inflate *The Twilight Zone* to hour-long episodes for this season. But *The Twilight Zone* wasn't *The Outer Limits* (ABC's monster-heavy answer to *The Twilight Zone*), and Serling's whimsical tales lost their momentum at 50 minutes. The series returned to its half-hour

ANTHOLOGY OF ANTHOLOGIES

Rod Serling's show has spawned many imitators...

THE OUTER LIMITS

1963-1965, 1995-2002

Launched by ABC in 1963 as their answer to *The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits* promised its SF-hungry audience a calorie-rich diet of bug-eyed monsters and shiny spaceships – Serling's series was always more earthly in its approach to science fiction. It was *The Twilight Zone*, only louder and brasher.



NIGHT GALLERY

1969-1973

Rod Serling's *other* anthology show remains less celebrated, though there's still some top-tier writing contained within its 43 episodes. It doesn't have quite the consistency of its predecessor, however, as Serling failed to secure complete creative control over this one. It lasted three seasons.



BLACK MIRROR

2011-present

If the original *Twilight Zone* reflected the fears and concerns of the era it was made in, certainly Charlie Brooker's acclaimed anthology does the same for 21st century audiences. Chiller and more fatalistic than *The Twilight Zone*, *Black Mirror's* stories focus on the impact of new technology on our lives.



PHILIP K DICK'S ELECTRIC DREAMS

2017

Commissioned by Channel 4 to fill the gap when *Black Mirror* moved to Netflix, there's as much Rod Serling DNA in this series as there is Philip K Dick. Its standout episode, 'The Commuter', is a tale that could fit comfortably into any *Twilight Zone* season.



INSIDE NO 9

2014-present

Although Reece Shearsmith and Steve Pemberton's dark-hearted anthology only occasionally dips its toe into fantastical waters, it's clear that *The Twilight Zone's* penchant for twist endings has proved a big influence on this BBC Two fave. Unlike all the other series here, it's the only anthology which has a running time similar to those early *Twilight Zones*.



© GETTY (4)



ON A WING AND A SCARE

THE MAKING OF CLASSIC *TWILIGHT ZONE* EPISODE “NIGHTMARE AT 20,000 FEET”

ONE EPISODE OF JORDAN PEELE'S *TWILIGHT Zone* revival, 'Nightmare At 30,000 Feet', pays homage – while telling a different story – to a much-loved episode of the original series: the 1963 chiller 'Nightmare At 20,000 Feet'. Starring a pre-*Star Trek* William Shatner, the classic episode centres on an airplane passenger who spots a furry gremlin out on the wing... but cannot convince anyone that it's not a figment of his imagination.

The script of 'Nightmare At 20,000 Feet' was adapted by Richard Matheson from his 1961 short story of the same name. Inspiration struck when the writer was on a flight himself. "I looked out and there were all these clouds," Matheson explained. "I thought, 'Okay, what if I saw a guy skiing across them?', 'cause it looks just like snow! Then I realised, 'Well, that's not scary', so I came up with the idea of the gremlin being on the wing."

Thirty-three-year-old director Richard Donner – later to helm *Superman: The Movie* and *The Omen* – was able to make use of an impressive existing set of a plane interior and wing on the MGM lot, which (to collect the water being blown in to simulate rain) was suspended over a water tank.

The gremlin's mask was the work of William Tuttle, the man behind the Morlocks in 1960's *The Time Machine*, while its woolly body was sourced from the MGM wardrobe – a gorilla suit was another, rejected option! Inside the suit, suffering as it soaked up water, was Nick Cravat, formerly Burt Lancaster's partner in his days as an acrobat. Matheson was distinctly unimpressed by this "fuzzy bear", but as Donner explained, "It's a TV show and it's done for \$11... You just don't have the time and the money to design a costume and build a proper one."

The list of problems Donner had to contend with was formidable. "A man flying in on wires. Wind. Rain.

Lightning. Smoke, to give the effect of clouds. You couldn't hear yourself think because of the machines outside... It was just unbearable. If any one of those things went wrong, it ruined the whole take."

Worse still, on the penultimate day of filming, a producer broke the news that the set would not be available for the final day, as a feature film production was coming in to use it! Cue unexpected overtime for the entire cast and crew. "We stayed all night," Donner recalled. "We walked out when the sun came up!" **Ian Berriman**



roots by its fifth season, but by then *The Twilight Zone* had lost much of its lustre to the men at CBS. Serling was weakening his involvement with the show, sponsors were becoming more difficult to find and audiences began to slip away. *The Twilight Zone* was quietly dropped in 1964, this time for good. "We've been on the air for five years," Serling remarked, "and I think the show took on a kind of aged look."

ZONING OUT

Rod Serling died in 1975 from complications during heart surgery, mere months after ABC turned down an offer from Serling and producer Aaron Spelling to revive his most famous series. He was only 50.

It was only in the years after his death, however, that *The Twilight Zone*'s reputation truly bloomed. Steven Spielberg, John Landis, Joe Dante and George Miller teamed up for 1983's *Twilight Zone: The Movie*, which remade three classic stories from the series' canon – 'Kick The Can', 'It's A Good Life' and 'Nightmare At 20,000 Feet', along with one new story, about a far-right bigot who finds himself first in Nazi-occupied France during World War II, and then on the receiving end of a braying bunch of racists in the Deep South of the 1960s. That four of Hollywood's starriest directors would lend their names to a portmanteau movie based on an old TV show was a testament to its cultural power, and in 1985 a new *Twilight Zone* series made its debut on CBS. Produced by a pre-*Game Of Thrones* George RR Martin, it offered up

adaptations of stories from the likes of Harlan Ellison, Stephen King and Ray Bradbury and is let down only by its smudgy, edited-on-videotape 1980s production values.

Another revival dropped in 2002 on the UPN network. Though it lasted just a single season, one episode piqued the interest of long-time *Twilight Zone* fans, a sequel to the original run's 'It's A Good Life', featuring a now-grown Bill Mumy returning to a role he'd last played 42 years previously. The rest were simply 'meh'.

Those two revivals may have tarnished the brand slightly. The movie, meanwhile, will always be remembered more for the deaths of three of the cast in an on-set helicopter accident than for its stories. The incident led to civil and criminal action against the filmmakers which lasted nearly a decade, primarily against the segment director John Landis. Landis, along with associate producer George Folsey Jr, pilot Dorcsey Wingo, production manager Dan Allingham, and explosives specialist Paul Stewart were all tried for manslaughter but were acquitted.

CBS All Access's version is the first time since the original that the series has had a burningly talented and visionary writer as its figurehead. Like Serling, Peele himself is front and centre of the revival, introducing each episode. The revival aired for two seasons, and quietly bowed out after mixed reviews.

While the revivals didn't set the world on fire, it's never a bad time to enter the library of classic fables. You'd do well to track down an episode or two, and see what lies within The Twilight Zone.

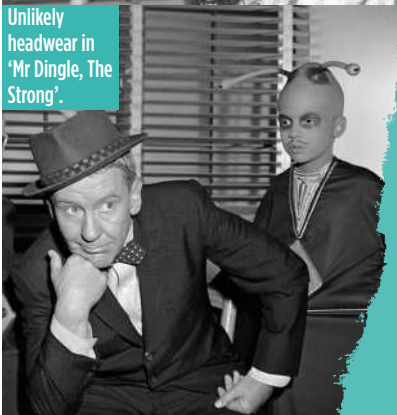
William Shatner in 1960's 'Nick Of Time'.



Buster Keaton, complete with time helmet, in 'Once Upon A Time'.



Unlikely headwear in 'Mr Dingle, The Strong'.



ZONE HEADS

Our favourite *Twilight Zone* moments in popular culture

THE TWIGLET ZONE

In the late 1980s, some advertising execs spotted the similarity between the name of a British savoury snack and Rod Serling's show – a match made in heaven.



POP WILL EAT ITSELF: "DEF CON ONE"

The iconic *Twilight Zone* theme gets a sample here in this pop culture-laden dance track from future movie composer Clint Mansell's former band.



FAMILY GUY: "LOVE THY TROPHY"

Rod Serling makes an animated appearance in this 'Monsters Are Due On Maple Street'-influenced episode of Seth MacFarlane's cartoon sitcom.



THIRD ROCK FROM THE SUN: WILLIAM SHATNER AND JOHN LITHGOW COMPARE NOTES

Original 'Nightmare At 20,000 Feet' actor William Shatner meets big-screen 'Nightmare At 20,000 Feet' actor John Lithgow. "I looked out the window and I saw something on the wings of the plane," says Shat. "The same thing happened to me!" replies Lithgow.

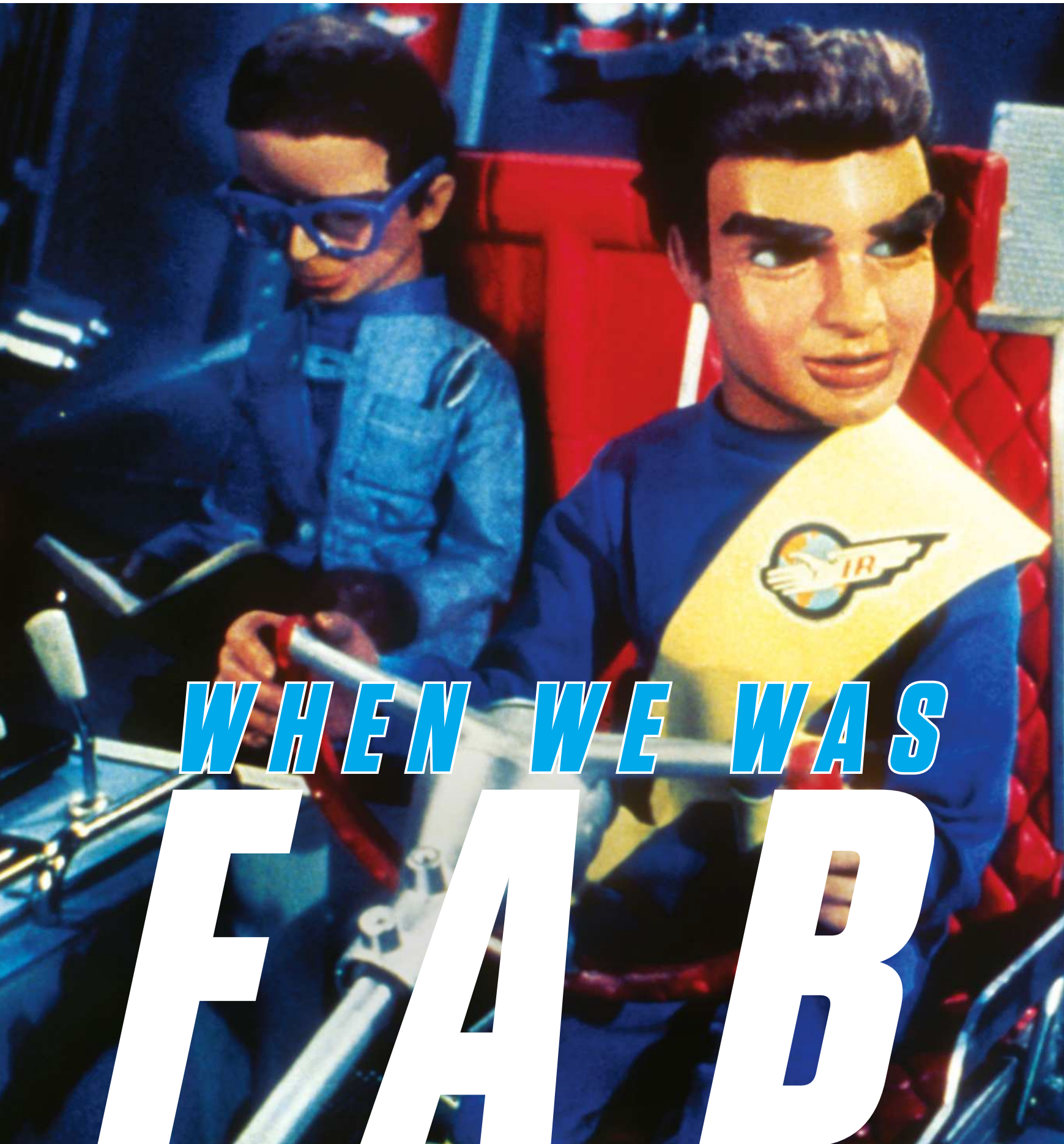


SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE: 'NIGHTMARE AT 20,000 FEET'

2013 comedy skit with Jude Law in the William Shatner role and Bill Hader as a pitch-perfect Rod Serling.



© GETTY (4)



WHEN WE WAS

FAB



IN 1965,
GERRY ANDERSON
BROUGHT HIS MOST
ENDURING CREATION TO
THE SCREEN, PRESENTING
THE ADVENTURES OF
INTERNATIONAL RESCUE.
SO HOW COME
THUNDERBIRDS
JUST KEEPS ON GOING
AFTER SIX DECADES? *SFX*
ASKS GERRY'S SON JAMIE

WORDS: **ALISTAIR MCGOWN**

A FORMATIVE INFLUENCE FOR generations of British sci-fi fans, Gerry Anderson's string-bound perennial featured five fantastic, futuristic rescue craft bankrolled by millionaire ex-astronaut Jeff Tracy and crewed by his square-jawed sons Scott, Virgil, Alan, Gordon and John, working from their secret Pacific base, Tracy Island.

Keeper of the Anderson legacy is son Jamie Anderson. Would he agree that *Thunderbirds* is his dad's most enduring creation? He laughs at the question. "If I said anything other than that, people would think I was taking the piss! No, it absolutely is, certainly in the UK. If you say *Thunderbirds*, people know Gerry Anderson. If you say Gerry Anderson, people know *Thunderbirds*."

When *Thunderbirds* came along in 1965, Gerry's team – including second wife Sylvia – had already produced futuristic children's series *Supercar*, *Fireball XL5* and *Stingray*, backed by the generosity of TV mogul Lew Grade. As *Stingray* launched on ITV in autumn 1964, filming had already begun on its successor, working title *International Rescue*. Its final name would come via Gerry's late elder brother Lionel, an RAF flyer posted Stateside during World War Two, who'd appeared in the background of the 1942 film *Thunder Birds*. The show's concept, meanwhile, had been inspired by the Lengede German mine rescue of November 1963.

Thunderbirds issued warnings on the perils of fully-automated technology, with grand follies such as monorails or forest-felling machines usually ending in a satisfying explosion. But the show's family-friendly carnage – in which not even the bad guys died – made eminently suitable teatime fare.

When Anderson screened the first half-hour episode for his boss in late December 1964,

© ALAMY (1)



grade declared, “This isn’t a television series – this is a movie!”, handing Gerry the daunting task of doubling the nine episodes already filmed to an hour in length. The subsequent padding, with tangential subplots, gave expanded roles for subsidiary characters such as stammering inventor Brains and in particular aristocratic secret agent Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward and hangdog-faced chauffeur Parker. The sophisticated Lady P took *Thunderbirds* into the arena of *James Bond*-style espionage.

After first airing on 30 September 1965, *Thunderbirds* quickly became a craze, with a merchandising empire springing up long before anyone talked of “franchises”. A second series went into production from March 1966, but Grade’s gamble in playing the US networks off against each other brought the empire crashing down, after he turned down a massive \$7 million from NBC and their rivals passed. Grade cancelled *Thunderbirds* after just six more episodes, pinning his hopes on a network sale for an entirely new show. The far less cosy *Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons* duly began filming in January 1967.

Thunderbirds’ truncated autumn 1966 series ended with a Christmas Day special. Though Anderson enjoyed many future successes, there was a feeling Grade had killed the goose that laid the golden egg.

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Yet the show refused to die, with reruns in each successive decade garnering new generations of fans. In 1991, BBC Two repeats suddenly became one of TV’s hottest properties, with a Matchbox Tracy Island playset becoming the must-have toy for Christmas 1992.

Then aged seven, Jamie Anderson sensed something odd happening to these ancient shows he’d seen on VHS. “Suddenly my school friends were watching these episodes, and their parents were rewatching them and bringing in 1960s TV21 annuals for Dad to sign. It was all very new, him becoming a celebrity like that.”

So why was *Thunderbirds* his father’s most enduring show? “Dad was asked that multiple times,” ponders Anderson. “He’d always say, ‘If I could answer that, I’d apply the formula to everything else and have a winner every time!’”

Was the killer format having five cool craft designs instead of just one? “Well, later in *Captain Scarlet* you’ve got loads of vehicles, so probably not,” muses Anderson. “You could keep breaking it down to a molecular level. So, multiple craft, yes. Thunderbird 2 with the modular element, that’s a fantastic choice... The colour palette of the craft, each having their own specific form and function...”

Anderson argues there was no ulterior motive here, though. “I don’t think for one minute they sat down and thought, ‘Right, we want toys, so let’s have five main craft.’”

INTERNATIONAL REBOOTS

The series’ enduring legacy includes numerous reimaginings



5... THUNDERBIRDS 2086 (1986)

Made without Gerry’s involvement, this 13-episode Japanese anime series featured an expanded fleet of 17 craft.



4... TURBOCHARGED THUNDERBIRDS (1994)

Abysmal American repackaging of original episodes using ironic linking material from two futuristic American teens.



3... THUNDERBIRDS (2004)

Jonathan Frakes directed this campy live-action big screen remake. Gerry Anderson declared it “The biggest load of crap I have ever seen in my entire life.”



2... THUNDERBIRDS 1965 (2015)

Kickstarter-funded, entirely authentic puppet recreations by fan Stephen La Riviere, with a soundtrack from ’60s albums.

1... THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO! (2015-20)

Made after Gerry’s death, this faithful, BAFTA-nominated TV revival mixed CGI craft and characters with model sets.



Which is possibly how producers would develop a show now? “Exactly,” he agrees. “You’d say, ‘We need to sell £100 million-worth of toys, so how are we going to do that?’ Instantly it’s lost any true soul it ever had.”

Anderson also points to the show’s altruistic heart. “It has a utopian view, with a selfless family doing great things with cool tech. It came from a genuine place. People use the word ‘authentic’ all the time now – it’s become meaningless and artificial – but Dad was absolutely in awe of this rescue operation going on in Germany, so it came from a real place of fascination.

“Loads of Dad’s team had been in the RAF or were fascinated with aviation and space flight,” he continues, considering their essential input. “It was 100 people who loved filmmaking; in puppets, special effects, model-making. It was a truly passionate cottage industry where they’d perfected their art. They had the perfect amount of runway to then take off, essentially.”

Anderson also argues that part of *Thunderbirds*’ family appeal was the family at its core. “All of Dad’s prior shows had a bit of a family vibe, but *Thunderbirds* is the only one that has a real family at the heart of it.”

That family contrasts with his father’s own, he explains. “If you look at the Tracy family, and most of the families in Anderson series, there’s no mother, because Dad had a terrible relationship with his mum, who was a deeply unpleasant woman. When [elder brother] Lionel was killed, she said [to Gerry], ‘Why couldn’t it have been you?’

If that’s not a reason to eliminate mother figures from all shows going forward, I don’t know what is!

“But if there’s a father figure, it’s a strong one – something lacking in



Dignity, and woodworm, ran in the family.



Just popping down the shop for some toilet paper.



Dinky Toy immortality awaits on eBay.



"Could you buy less fur coats and give me a raise?"

Dad's own life. His father Joe was a meek and mild-mannered man. Not to paint him in any negative light, but Dad didn't have that strong father figure growing up. So, you're creating these idealistic families and you have strong, powerful father figures at the head like Jeff Tracy."

The Tracys' heroism was also rooted in Gerry's upbringing. "He never got over the loss of his brother, so why not create a family of heroic brothers? He was basically trying to live up to his hero vision of Lionel. Scott clearly has his roots in Lionel; a similar character is present in every single Anderson show, pretty much. I think subconsciously he was always bringing him back in."

Anderson suggested that timing was also part of *Thunderbirds*' success. "After five years, not only had they got to a point where the puppets looked great and the performances were lovely, but they'd also primed a big fanbase who knew what to expect, but were still wowed because it was the next step on," he said. "Their technical proficiency had reached a peak. [Effects supervisor] Derek Meddings had become a complete master, and everything looked better than anything else on TV at the time – a lot of it still stands up against anything that can be done now."

Thunderbirds was Gerry Anderson's last true marionette series, with a switch to human proportions and more realistic motion on *Captain Scarlet*, and the wobbly heads and inimitable walks replaced with limited motions and nods. Eagle-eyed fans have, however, spotted a shift to a more restrained puppetry

style and highly detailed sets within *Thunderbirds*' brief second block. "You can see that 'second series' of *Thunderbirds* as making all the changes except the puppets," Anderson concurs. "Every break between series was a time to take stock and look at possible improvements. I'm not sure that necessarily makes it any better, but it shows you that desire to constantly improve."

MIXED FEELINGS

Gerry Anderson's restless drive to move forward with new shows inevitably meant that he could be ambivalent about his most famous creation. What did Gerry make of *Thunderbirds*' 1990s revival?

"It was a bit of a full circle thing; after the partnership with Lew dissolved, the rights went with ITC and he became disconnected from it," explains Anderson. "After *Terrahawks* in the mid-1980s, things were quiet and Mum [Gerry's third wife, Mary] and Dad took over ITC merchandise licensing. Around 1986/87 his attempts to make *Space Police* weren't getting much traction, so the licensing became key. In 1991, they were gazumped over the rights and it was taken away from them at a difficult time when they needed the cash."

Anderson lost the rights just as *Thunderbirds* merchandise became huge again. "At that point, *Thunderbirds* had become a bit toxic and negative to Dad. He felt, 'Everybody talks about that old show that I don't own, I want to do new stuff! I don't have any control of it, what am I gonna do?'"

"He ended up working in advertising to pay the bills. When it came back a part of him thought, 'Oh god, here we go again. People asking me about this old show that I can't use to my advantage.' Initially he was almost embarrassed.

But then it started opening doors on what would become his next series, *Space Precinct*.

"Dad went from being very proud of *Thunderbirds*, to it becoming a bit of a

millstone around his neck, to it becoming a source of negativity, to it relaunching the final phase of his career. He came to appreciate that it didn't necessarily typecast him as 'that puppet guy' and looked upon it favourably eventually, though it took him a few years after that revival to really say, 'This is my calling card' rather than 'This is a problem for me'. He finally came to accept his fate as 'Mister *Thunderbirds*'."

Gerry Anderson sadly passed away on 26 December 2012, aged 83, but his shows, and in particular *Thunderbirds*, live on.

Visit gerryanderson.co.uk for updates, including Jamie Anderson's weekly podcast. *Thunderbirds* is available on DVD/Blu-ray and BritBox.

© ALAMY (4)

“It was 100 people who loved filmmaking; in puppets, special effects, model-making”



THE DAYS OF THE DOCTOR

AS **DOCTOR WHO** APPROACHES ITS 60TH ANNIVERSARY, WE BREAK THE LAWS OF TIME TO CELEBRATE BRITAIN'S GREATEST SCI-FI SHOW

WORDS: NICK SETCHFIELD

ITS HERO MAY HAVE PUT PAID TO countless alien incursions but *Doctor Who* itself is the ultimate invader. From the moment that uncanny theme tune first howled out of boxy black-and-white TV sets – “It’s the kind of music that comes through the walls,” Eighth Doctor Paul McGann once observed – Britain’s flagship sci-fi series has infiltrated our homes and our heads. For nearly 60 years it’s made the cosy living room a portal to other realities, where dinosaurs stalk the London Underground, killer mannequins gun down high street shoppers and churchyard statues zap you into the past (don’t blink – whatever you do, don’t blink!).

Television was still a relatively recent phenomenon when *Doctor Who* debuted in 1963. The Queen’s coronation a decade earlier marked the medium’s first real surge in popularity while ITV, the UK’s second channel, only launched in 1955. The BBC’s nerve-shredding *Quatermass* serials of the 1950s proved that science fiction could be a smash with the public but they had been shown late in the evening, targeting adults. *Doctor Who* was coming for your kids.

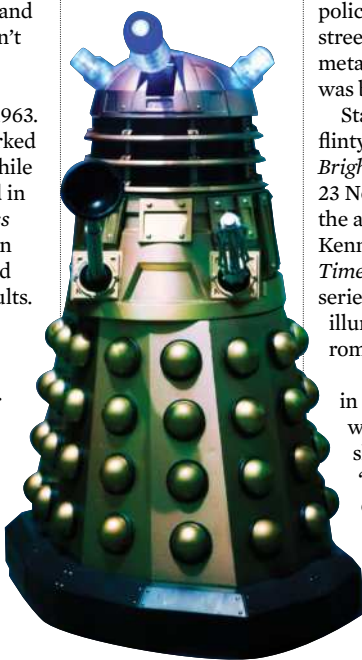
It’s fitting that a series powered by time travel should be born out of a time slot issue. Donald Baverstock, Chief of Programmes for BBC 1, needed to fill a gap in the Saturday schedule between dad-bait sports programme *Grandstand* and teen-fave *Juke Box Jury*. He wanted an early-evening adventure serial that could bridge both audiences, hitting the sweet spot between the 2.30 from Doncaster and The Beatles.

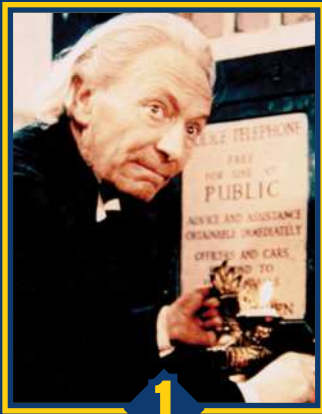
Head of Drama Sydney Newman, a bullish Canadian imported by the BBC for his populist touch, developed the new show with script department supremo Donald Wilson, who already had an idea about a fantastical craft “not only for going backward and forward in time, but into space, and into all kinds of matter”. This ship would be disguised as a familiar, humdrum sight – a night watchman’s shelter, perhaps, hiding “a marvellous contrivance of quivering electronics”. Ultimately arriving on-screen as a police telephone box, then common on British streets, the TARDIS can be seen as a sly metaphor for TV itself: an everyday object that was bigger on the inside.

Starring William Hartnell, best known as a flinty, hard-faced presence in such films as *Brighton Rock*, *Doctor Who* launched on 23 November 1963, entering a world reeling from the assassination of US President John F Kennedy the day before. Billed in the *Radio Times* as “an adventure in space and time”, the series was originally designed to be educational, illuminating crucial events in history between romps in outer space.

The Daleks changed everything. Introduced in the second story, the show’s defining villains were mutant fascists that channelled the long shadows of Nazism and the atomic bomb.

“They represent for so many people so many different things,” said creator Terry Nation, “but they all see them as government, as officialdom, as that unhearing, unthinking, blanked-out face of authority





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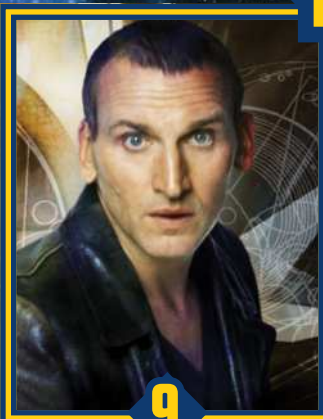
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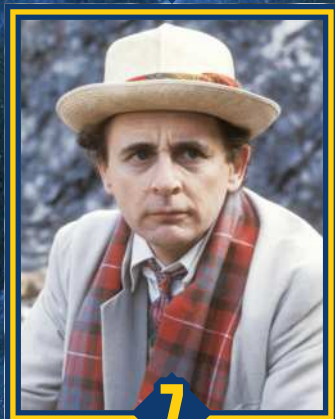
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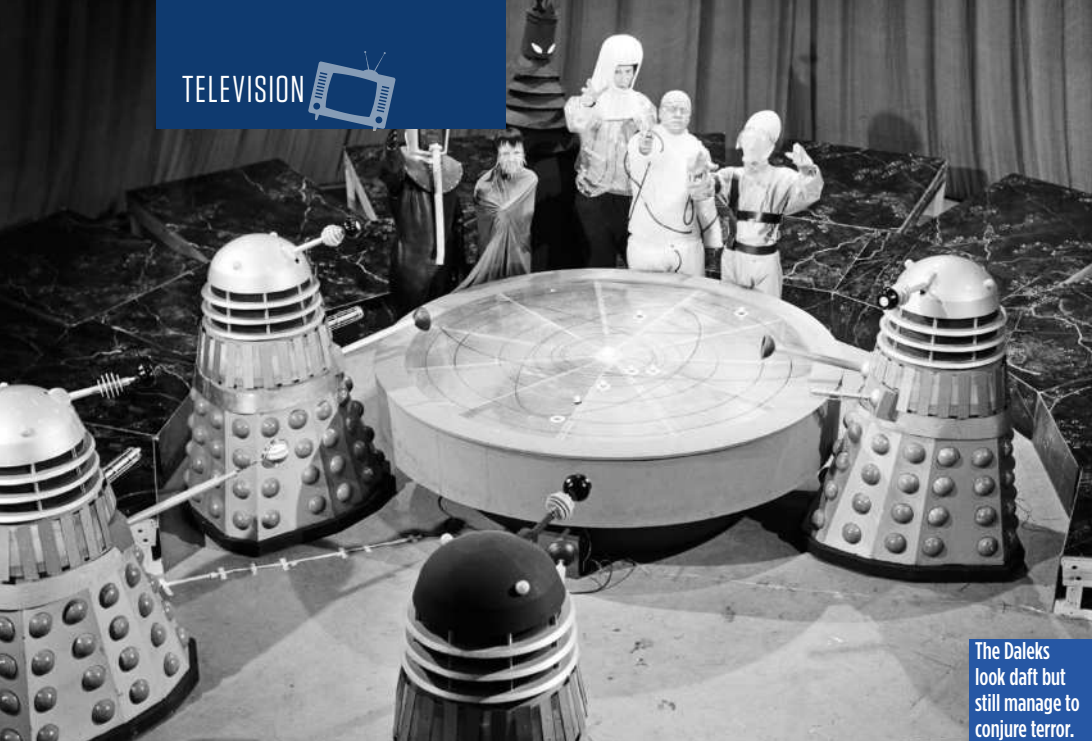


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The Daleks look daft but still manage to conjure terror.

THE GOSPEL OF PAUL

The mixed fortunes of Doctor Who's 1990s comeback

Set in San Francisco and filmed in Vancouver, the 1996 *Doctor Who* TV movie was a co-production between the BBC, Universal and the Fox network. No wonder it feels like a weird transatlantic outlier in the show's history, complete with half-human Doctor prone to violent bouts of snogging.

But its glossy production values proved the series could work for the *X-Files* generation and Paul McGann makes a dashing, windswept Time Lord. "It was around this time that the Anne Rice things were in the air," he told *SFX* in 2004, "this sort of melancholy vampire character, more gothic, which is what I was very much more drawn to."



that will destroy you because it *wants* to destroy you." Designer Raymond Cusick gave the creatures an utterly inhuman shape and a predatory gliding motion that only added to their appeal.

Newman was furious – he had insisted that the show be a strictly monster-free zone – but he soon acknowledged that the malevolent pepperpots had made *Doctor Who* a phenomenon. Verity Lambert – the Drama department's only female producer, and also its youngest – found herself in charge of a hit. "The rest of the BBC didn't really talk about it," she told *SFX* in 2006. "They were a bit ashamed of it, I think! I think it was the first BBC show to get into the top 20, and they were a bit pissed off! The whole drama department was doing all the posh stuff and then here was this little show."

WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED

Dalekmania propelled the TARDIS onto the big screen with 1965's *Dr Who And The Daleks* and the sequel that arrived a year later, *Daleks' Invasion Earth 2150 AD*. Drenched in Technicolor and delivering widescreen spectacle, these kid-friendly movies demonstrated that the show's mythology could expand to fill the space available. And with horror icon Peter Cushing in the lead role, they proved that the Doctor was bigger than any one actor.

The idea of regeneration – introduced in 1966 but not named until 1974 – is the true secret of *Doctor Who*'s immortality. As William Hartnell gave way to the puckish Patrick Troughton the series unlocked the power to renew



Nothing an old Pertwee karate chop can't solve.

itself forever. Troughton cut a more whimsical figure but he took on a memorable parade of monsters, including classic threats the Yeti and the Ice Warriors. The space age vibe of the late 1960s was reflected in such backdrops as moonbases and interplanetary stations – as well as the gleaming, high-tech chill of Troughton's recurring adversaries, the Cybermen.

In 1970, *Doctor Who* blasted into colour with a dynamic new star. All velvet jackets and frilled shirts, Jon Pertwee brought a touch of flamboyance to the role while upping the action quotient. Exiled to Earth, facing arch-foe the Master, this dandy, karate-chopping boffin acted as scientific advisor to the military. No Pertwee adventure felt complete without scenes of squaddies unloading machine guns at extraterrestrial beasts. By now the series could celebrate its own history: the tenth-anniversary tale 'The Three Doctors' teamed Pertwee with his predecessors ("So you're my replacements, a dandy and a clown!" grumped the Hartnell incarnation).

Tom Baker took over in 1974, his charisma as infinite as his multi-coloured scarf. It was an inspired piece of casting, the perfect fusion of part and star, and made the toothy, booming Baker the most popular Doctor yet, a Saturday night folk hero to follow the football results. "The impact of *Doctor Who* astounded me," he told *SFX* in 2018. "It was just amazing. To suddenly be – absolutely overnight – famous,

In *Doctor Who*, a scene like this can be seen as 'quite normal'.





everywhere. It was just wonderful. I'd always wanted to be famous, I think."

At first Baker's adventures had a lurid, Hammer horror feel. Egyptian mummies prowled the countryside and sinister brains bubbled in vats in lightning-blasted labs. Even the Loch Ness monster was revealed as the pawn of alien intelligence. But after self-appointed moral guardian Mary Whitehouse of the National Viewers and Listeners Association complained that *Doctor Who* was lurching into "teatime brutality for tots" the show became altogether larkier. By 1979, *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* creator Douglas Adams was serving as script editor and an irrepressible Baker was milking the laughs with robot hound K9 as his straight man.

The 1980s saw mixed fortunes for *Doctor Who*. Incoming Doctor Peter Davison was the youngest actor cast in the role yet and a rising star of television. With this boyish, cricket-crazed Time Lord batting, the show moved to a twice-weekly slot and celebrated its 20th anniversary with the epic nostalgia-fest story 'The Five Doctors' and an infamously oversubscribed two-day celebration at

“The rest of the BBC didn't really talk about it”

Longleat – essentially the Woodstock festival with less dope and nudity, and more home-knitted scarves and autograph books.

TIME OUT

Sixth Doctor Colin Baker returned to Saturdays but suddenly *Doctor Who* was no longer an unassailable British institution. Saddled with a costume that looked like a controlled explosion in the BBC wardrobe, Baker's Doctor seemed engineered to alienate the audience – in his first story he tried to throttle his companion, Peri, and that's never a good look for the hero of millions. Damned by the BBC itself as outdated and overly violent, *Doctor Who* was cancelled in March 1985.

The inevitable outcry won the show a reprieve. But by the time Sylvester McCoy's impish Doctor took the TARDIS key, he found himself pitched against *Coronation Street* in a kamikaze scheduling decision that suggested the BBC was guilty of the slowest homicide in TV history. Pity; by the end of his run, McCoy's adventures were the freshest and most ambitious in years.

After the false start of the 1996 TV movie with Paul McGann, *Doctor Who*'s all-conquering resurrection in 2005 was a genuine triumph. Showrunner Russell T Davies brought the love of a bonafide fan but also the canniness of a modern-day TV professional, unafraid to go for the jugular of mainstream audiences. Teamed with the star power of pop's Billie Piper, Christopher Eccleston's Doctor was a wounded tough in a leather jacket, the last survivor of a devastating Time War. Stripping the show's mythology to its core, injecting genuine emotion, Davies made *Doctor Who* a Saturday night fixture, smashing the competition on ITV.

"People always said that family viewing was dead, but I never believed it," he told *SFX* in 2006. "*Doctor Who*, by its sheer format – it's different each week – could be event television. Fly a spaceship through Big Ben, bring back the Daleks, get Simon Callow in there and actually, you are talking event television, and it works."

By 2009, David Tennant's pin-striped mockney Doctor was the face of BBC One, fronting station idents. His successors, however, had to navigate more turbulent times for TV: Matt Smith's stories were knottier, powered by twists and paradoxes, built for the age of the iPlayer catch-up; at a silvery 55, Peter Capaldi returned to the old-school mould even as traditional viewing habits collapsed and the world went mad for streaming; Jodie Whittaker, the first official female Doctor, has faced the increasingly polarised landscape of social media, where tweets fly like Dalek death rays.

Now Russell T Davies is returning for a second shot at showrunning, with *Sex Education* star Ncuti Gatwa promising an electric new Doctor. Before that, the series will celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2023 with a seemingly paradoxical comeback for David Tennant – how and why no one's saying. Wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey. Past and future colliding. It's how the Doctor's always rolled.

© ALAMY (7)



Patrick
McGoohan
created a TV
masterpiece.





THE PRISONER

“I AM NOT A NUMBER, I AM A FREE MAN!”
ROBERT FAIRCLOUGH REVISITS PATRICK MCGOOHAN’S
TIMELESS REVOLUTIONARY CLASSIC

Imagine Peter Capaldi being given millions of pounds to make his own TV series. It’s partly his idea, he’s going to star in it, write some of the episodes, direct several and he’s also the executive producer: artistically, what he says goes.

It’s all been decided on a handshake – no contracts – and Capaldi has absolute carte blanche to do what he wants.

Unlikely? In the regimented TV industry of the 21st century most probably, but in 1966 that’s exactly what happened. At that time, one of UK TV’s most popular stars was Patrick McGoochan, a compelling Irish-American performer, with acting credentials as varied as Henrik Ibsen’s gravely philosophical play *Brand* and the tough movie thriller *Hell Drivers* (1957). By the mid-1960s McGoochan, along with Roger Moore in *The Saint*, was the top international export of the Independent Television Company (the international arm of ITV’s London and Midlands network, Associated TeleVision). McGoochan starred as John Drake, the laconic spy hero of ITC’s film series *Danger Man*, which had made \$8.25 million for the company in worldwide sales.

Unsurprisingly, McGoochan had a lot of clout with ITC. When he told his flamboyant boss Lew Grade he wanted to leave *Danger Man* to diversify into other areas of television, with his own series and production company Everyman Films, the ITC chairman listened. Considering McGoochan’s new idea “so crazy it might just work”, Grade indeed gave his protégé the go-ahead and funding on the strength of a handshake.

McGoochan’s concept had been in his head for a long time. “Since maybe about seven years old,” he revealed in the 1983 documentary *Six Into One: The Prisoner File*. He was fascinated by “The individual against the establishment, the individual against bureaucracy, the individual against so many laws that were all confining.” McGoochan’s social observations were given a structured context by George Markstein, the journalist and writer the actor had employed to help him develop his own projects. With a detailed knowledge of espionage, Markstein knew of a

World War II holding facility for spies who were a security risk, Inverlair Lodge in Scotland. This became the basis for the new series and gave the show its title – *The Prisoner*.

LOOKING THE PART

If McGoochan’s creative freedom was a television first for an actor, the series boasted several others. *The Prisoner* was given a striking visual look by a six-week location shoot in the North Wales coastal village of Portmeirion, an enchanting architectural folly founded by Sir Clough Williams-Ellis in 1925. A colourful, disorientating mixture of buildings that had represented China, Italy, the Middle East and Switzerland was ideal for a stylised open prison that could be anywhere in the world. Add to that the construction of futuristic interior sets at MGM’s film studios in Borehamwood and it’s easy to believe that *The Prisoner* was the most expensive British television series made in the



The villainous Number 2 is played by multiple actors.

© ALAMY (2)



The Prisoner 2009

Village life revisited

In November 2009, a revival of *The Prisoner* co-produced by ITV and AMC began transmission. The eminent cast was led by Jim Caviezel as 6 and Ian McKellen as 2. Reviews were mixed. Arguably, the revival would have been better received if it hadn't been designed as a sequel. This was most obvious in the character of 93, an old man clearly meant to be McGoohan's character (9 - 3 = 6). The Prisoner's co-creator was offered the small role, but as 93 was described as "a drunk" with "Stage Seven mental unwellness", perhaps it's not surprising that he declined.



1960s. The average cost was £75,000 an episode – over a staggering £1.2 million in today's terms.

The series' most significant innovation was its deliberate ambiguity. While enigmatic, surreal dramas like *Twin Peaks*, *Lost* and *Life On Mars* are familiar today, in the 1960s such an approach was usually the preserve of the occasional TV play, avant-garde cinema or literature. An unnamed ex-spy held among a population of people with numbers instead of names – McGoohan's character was given the designation Number 6 – pitched against a hi-tech prison state called "the Village" whose controllers remained unknown, had more in common with Franz Kafka and George Orwell's persecuted antiheroes Josef K and Winston Smith than TV action men; like his literary predecessors, Number 6 often wouldn't win.

The content of the stories was no less challenging. For *The Prisoner*'s writers, the blank canvas of the Village was an allegorical playground for different aspects of 1960s society. The Cold War between the capitalist West and the communist East, political satire, education, hallucinogenic drugs, popular psychology, consumerism, modern art and pop music – none other than The Beatles – all featured prominently. Together with *The Avengers*, *The Prisoner* was also one of the first TV series to be self-aware, with quoted influences as diverse as chess, Westerns and, notably, Shakespeare. "There was room in *The Prisoner* for drawing on other sources as it wasn't into profound reality or hard-edged modern realism," observed Roger Parkes, writer of the episode 'A Change Of Mind'. "It was a fantasy, and fantasies do that all the time."

SURVEILLANCE STATE

At a time when computers were almost exclusively in the hands of governments or corporations, new technology was central to the ahead-of-its-time, 24-hour surveillance culture of the Village, reinforcing the sense of paranoia emerging in the 1960s about society being controlled by hidden forces. The concealed cameras, streamlined security control room, bubble-like Rover guardian and experiments in the hospital also reflected the sense of unease in contemporary sci-fi, from



The Rovers were an odd design choice but soon became iconic.

“A profound statement for a family TV series, the final episode left viewers baffled and angry”

Doctor Who's Cybermen to HAL 9000 in 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (1968), about the direction in which science was heading.

If there was huge potential in *The Prisoner*'s format, McGoohan was concerned that stretching it to ITC's usual package of 26 episodes would exhaust the concept (and him). Originally favouring a seven-part miniseries, he apparently compromised on 17; unfortunately, this increased workload is where problems began. Don Chaffey, the director McGoohan worked with on the initial Portmeirion filming, left after a disagreement. Two others, Roy Rossoti and Robert Lynn, were sacked by McGoohan, while Robert Asher, a third director who was let go, was allowed to keep his credit. McGoohan replaced three of them, adding to the pressure he was under.

There was also tension with Markstein. The script editor was privately aggrieved at his lack of credit on the series he'd co-created, as well as McGoohan's rejection of two scripts he'd approved. Unhappy with the bizarre direction in which, he felt, McGoohan was steering *The Prisoner*, Markstein left after the first production block of 13 episodes. "McGoohan became a prisoner of the series and it's never nice to see that happen to a human being," he said in 1983.

Number 6 is subject to a creative variety of torture.



Aspects of production gave McGoohan a headache.



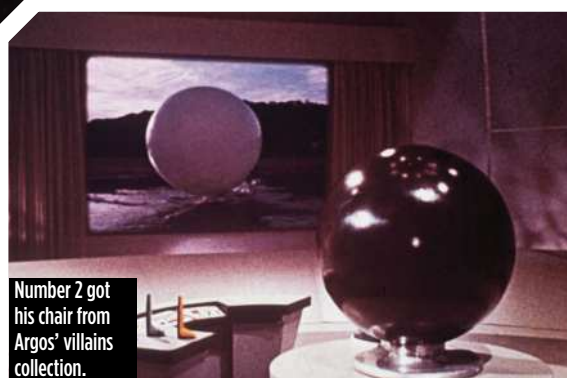


Number 42 is a former colleague of Number 6.

“The combination of ambition, frustration, wanting to be a writer, director, actor... It did something to him that wasn't very good and it was reflected in the series.”

Markstein was specifically talking about the final story ‘Fall Out’, which brought *The Prisoner* to an end in the most extreme episode yet. Writing and directing a psychedelic trial, McGoohan fused fact with fiction: the revelation that the Village controller Number 1 was the insane alter ego of Number 6 and therefore the ultimate gaoler – “Get rid of Number 1 and we are free,” as McGoohan put it – was a clear parallel with his position as the series’ now sole, exhausted creative force. A profound statement for a family TV series to make, ‘Fall Out’ left viewers baffled, angry or both – the ATV switchboard was jammed with complaining phone calls – and a subdued McGoohan departed for Los Angeles and career as a guest star in movies and TV. Apart from 1973’s musical feature film *Catch My Soul* (which also had a lukewarm critical reception) he would never have such control over a project again. A year later, Everyman Films’ short career finished in the bankruptcy courts with debts of over £60,000.

Time, however, has proved McGoohan’s instincts right. *The Prisoner* was also ahead of its time as one of the first British TV series to be made in colour; the ITV networks changed to the colour system at the beginning of the 1970s and when late-night repeats of the series began in the middle of the decade, they led in 1977 to the establishment of one of the UK’s earliest and longest-running TV-based fan organisations, Six of One, which since then has helped keep interest in the series alive. The 1980s saw a boom in interest in vintage television and, in 1983, *The Prisoner* was broadcast again by Channel 4. At the same time, the series’ anti-establishment message and striking imagery has been referenced and spoofed by everyone from punk band The Clash to car maker



Number 2 got his chair from Argos’ villains collection.

Renault. Crucially, *The Prisoner*’s most enduring legacy is that its mix of the intellectual – serious themes like freedom, identity and the ethics of science – and the populist – action sequences – is now a staple of modern fantasy TV series like *Colony* and *Orphan Black*.

Interest in reviving the series has never really gone away. After years of false starts, a flawed TV resurrection starring Jim Caviezel as Number 6, and Ian McKellen as Number 2 took place in 2009 (see the box on the far left). Since then, however, any rumblings of any new reimagining have been non-existent.

But the quality of the original is what keeps people coming back, as is evident from a new series of audio plays set in the 1960s Village. When *The Prisoner* was first shown, *A Clockwork Orange*’s writer Anthony Burgess defined the appeal of the series when he observed: “It is Orwellianism transferred to the world of the [TV] commercial in which machines work beautifully, everybody is on a kind of holiday and wears a blazer with a redcoat number... and the interrogators are as jolly as the commercial priests of the washing machine or wrapped cheddar.”

The Laughing Prisoner Down The Tube

The most memorable *Prisoner* spoof was originally shown in April 1987 as part of the Channel 4 music programme *The Tube*. Presenter Jools Holland resigned and woke up in the Village as Number 7, accompanied by Number 2 (Stephen Fry), Number 3 (nonsense-speaking Stanley Unwin) and, thanks to clips from *The Prisoner*, Number 6 himself.

Co-written by enthusiasts Holland and Fry, *The Laughing Prisoner* was filmed on location in Portmeirion in a cold January 1987. Popular bands of the day Magnum, Siouxsie and the Banshees and XTC were seen performing at landmarks such as the Bristol Colonnade (the bandstand in *The Prisoner*).



TELEVISION



R E S I S T A N



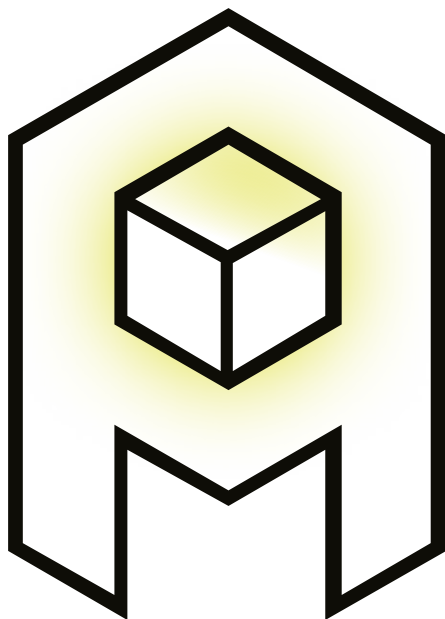
CE IS FUTILE

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WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE BORG TO *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION* IN 1989, THE SCENE WAS SET FOR A GAME-CHANGING TWO-PART STORY, AND A COMING OF AGE CLIFFHANGER. OVER THIRTY YEARS ON, WE LOOK BACK AT **“THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS”**

WORDS: **MARK SMITH**

ALL PICTURES © CBS. SHUTTERS TO CK (1)



RED LASER SLICES THROUGH THE mist as the familiar silhouette of Patrick Stewart walks towards the screen. But it's not Captain Picard who addresses the assembled Enterprise bridge crew, it's something altogether different. "I am Locutus of Borg. Resistance... is futile."

It's over 30 years since arguably the most iconic moment of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s entire run was aired. 'The Best Of Both Worlds' broke new ground with the scope of its storytelling, effects and score, as well as the fact that it was *Trek*'s first season-spanning two-parter. All combined to ensure it has left a legacy not just in the *Star Trek* universe, but wider pop culture.

Although *The Next Generation* was now three years into its run, it hadn't all been plain sailing, with many fans of the original series still resistant to the new incarnation. But season three is where most fans and critics alike agree the show started to fulfil its potential.

"There was, for me, a sense that the show had found its footing," explained Michael Okuda, who headed up *Star Trek*'s Scenic Art Department at the time. "When we saw the fan reaction to Part I [of 'Best Of Both Worlds'], we realised it had become its own entity and people liked the show for itself, not because it was a follow-on to something that was also very special."



The writers had wanted to return to the Borg ever since the cybernetic race were introduced in season two episode 'Q Who'. The problem was that with a force so unstoppable, figuring out how the crew could stop them presented a tough writing challenge. During the third season of *TNG*, producer and writer Michael Piller began to formulate an idea for the Borg's invasion of the Federation.

The story begins with the Enterprise investigating the disappearance of a remote colony which had been "scooped" off a planet, with it soon becoming apparent that the Borg are behind it. An engagement with a Borg Cube sees Captain Picard kidnapped, assimilated and turned into Locutus, a spokesman for the Borg who leads their attack right into the heart of Federation space. Setting a course for Earth, Locutus announces the Borg's intention to force the "unconditional surrender" of the Federation itself.

Beneath the sci-fi drama there were echoes of Piller's own personal dilemma. At the time of writing he was debating whether to leave the show – a question played out through Riker's plot arc, which involved him being offered command of his own ship and asking in one scene, "Why am I still here?"

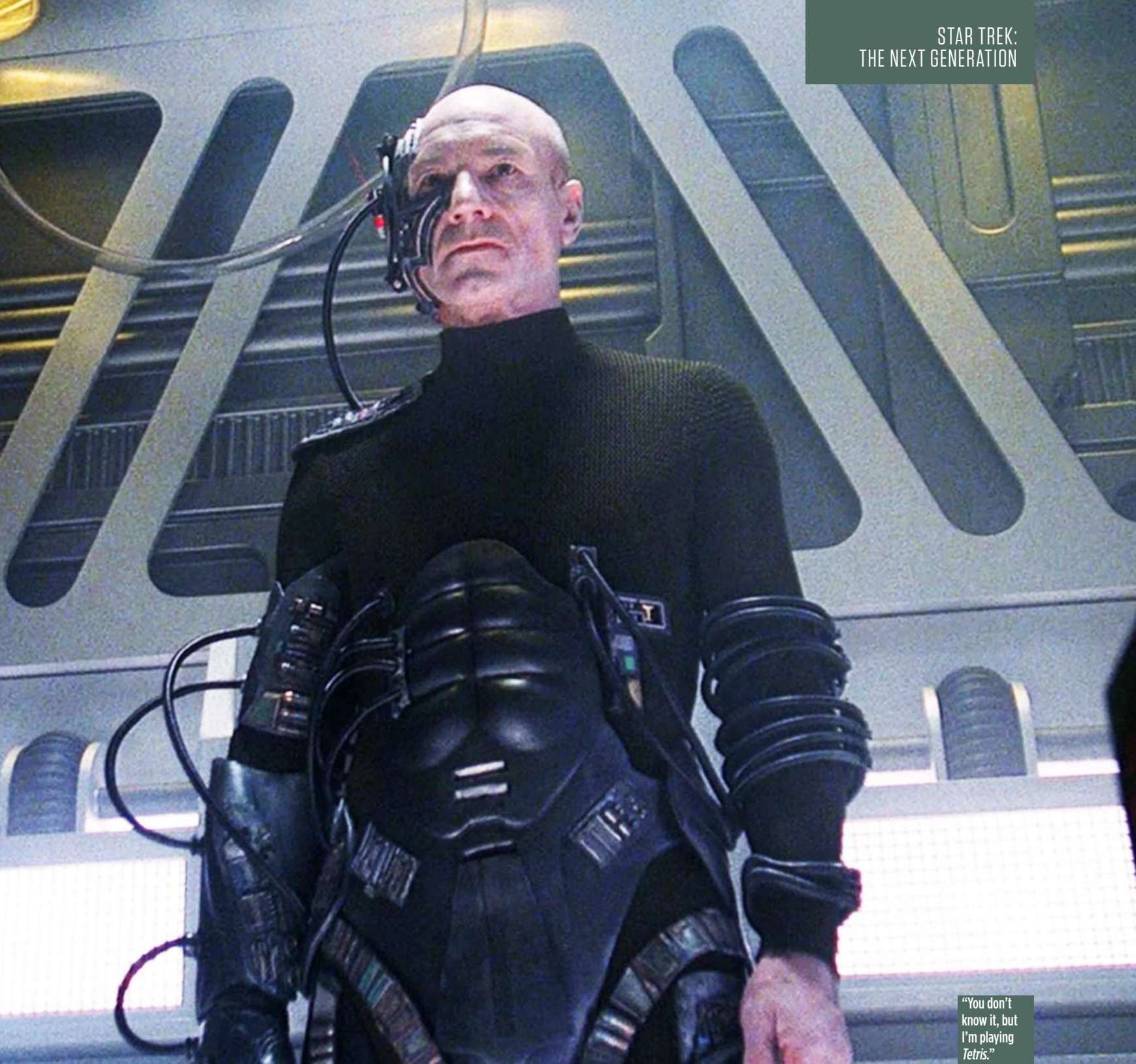
SHELBY SHOCK

In keeping with Gene Roddenberry's vision of the future, life aboard the Enterprise-D was marked by a distinct lack of internal conflict among the crew. That is, until the ambitious Lieutenant Commander Shelby arrived. While the Borg posed a threat to the exterior of the

ship, Shelby would serve to disrupt its inner harmony. Introduced as a Borg specialist, she came aboard to add her expertise. Tough and ambitious, she also set her sights on Riker's job – something she happily told him to his face.

"I think of Shelby as a straight-A student whose hand is always in the air," actress Elizabeth Dennehy told *SFX*. "She knows the answers, and she doesn't care if people like it or not."

For Dennehy, daughter of Hollywood legend, the late Brian Dennehy, it was one of her earliest roles in TV. Thirty years later, she's still surprised



"You don't know it, but I'm playing *Tetris*."

by its lasting legacy. "I'm 59 now – I can't believe people still talk about it and still care," she laughs. "I was 28 and wasn't into sci-fi. I was living in LA and auditioning. I would just go from audition to audition to audition. It was just another job. I didn't know who [Jonathan] Frakes was, I didn't know Riker, I had no clue. I was completely ignorant, and I think it was actually a good thing. Because I think that if I had been a fan, or been a part of that world, I would have been too nervous."

This blissful ignorance of just what she'd stepped into helped her develop Shelby's

Well, it was a valiant attempt, but things...



...aren't going so well for Picard and his crew.

ALL PICTURES © CBS. GETTY (1)



SETTLING A SCORE

**Composer Ron Jones on
scoring the Borg invasion**



Everything about 'The Best Of Both Worlds' was different to what had come before on *The Next Generation*, and the soundtrack was no exception. Scored by the show's then composer Ron Jones, the synth-heavy soundtrack has gained a strong fan following; in 1991 it became only the second *TNG* soundtrack to be released as a standalone album.

"It was about encountering a superior, digital, amoral enemy and the challenge to survive," Jones told *SFX*. "So I had to make the score very dark, and show the Enterprise to be pressed to near death. If the audience did not feel that this might be death and total destruction, it all would not have worked."

"The Borg were represented in my score by a sampled, electronic choir," he continued, "And the Borg theme was a numeric, tone-row motif, very devoid of humanity. The crew of the Enterprise was analogue, human and the thematic is more about the human meeting a great challenge," he explains.

To illustrate the scale of the piece, the orchestra for Part I and Part II was double the size of that for other episodes, at 77 musicians.

"Television rarely goes where that two-part film went," Jones said, with pride. "It still stands up well."



character. Dennehy wasn't overawed – so Shelby wasn't either. "I think the cool thing about Shelby is that she was not nervous," she highlighted. "Nobody scared her. There was the ballsy part of her which was, 'I have a job here to do – you're in my way. And I don't care if you like me or not, I'm not here to make friends. I'm here to get a job done!'"

The Next Generation cast were famously close friends. Coming into a tight cast and crew can be daunting for an outsider, but Dennehy says that was never a problem. "Jonathan Frakes was so kind to me, so generous. I was in a tiny little honey wagon [TV slang for a toilet trailer]. He was like, 'Come in and use my trailer,'" she remembered.

A certain Shakespearean actor also played Cupid on set. "I remember that Patrick Stewart was constantly trying to fix me up with people," Dennehy revealed. "He was trying to get me and Brent [Spiner] to go off on vacations together! He was like a little matchmaker. That was pretty funny. They were all very, very sweet."

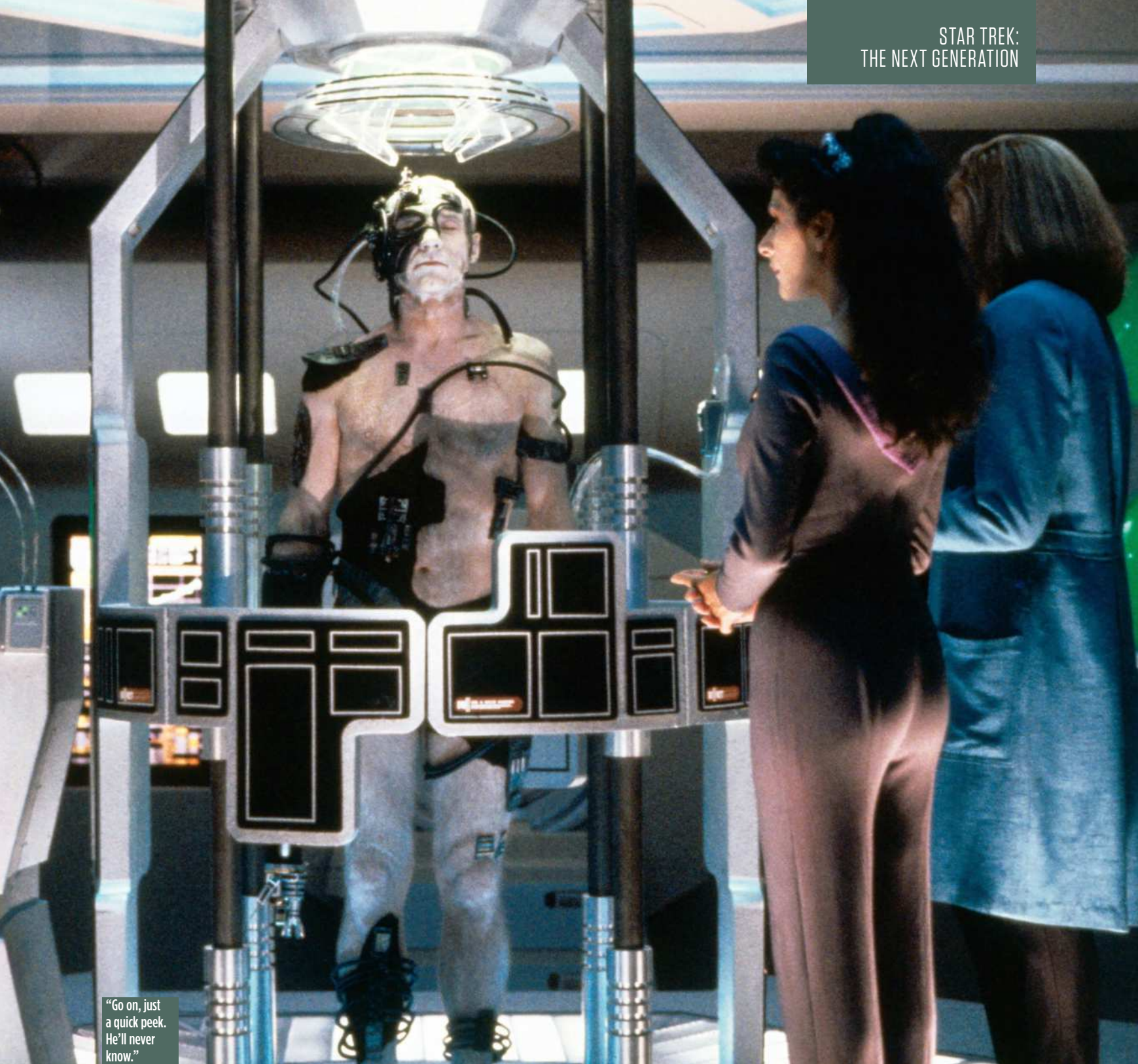


"So, how often do you trim it? Twice a day?"



Despite the warm welcome, Dennehy said she was unprepared for the demands of the shooting schedule. She'd previously been used to commercials, where an actor gets to shoot the same scene over and over again. *The Next Generation's* schedule meant actors had to learn their lines before each scene, then move on to the next.

"On my first day I thought I was going to be fired. I did not know my lines well enough," she admitted. "And I'll never forget them now. It was the scene where I said, 'Projections suggest that a Borg ship like this one could continue to function

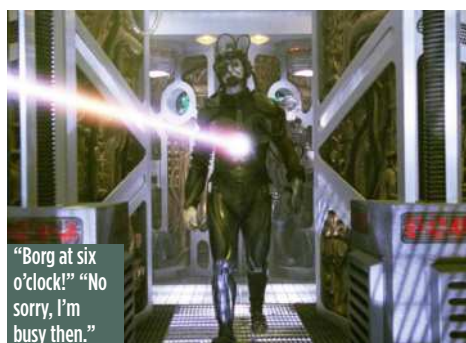


"Go on, just a quick peek. He'll never know."

effectively even if 78% of it were rendered inoperable.' I will never forget those lines, because I did not know them really in-my-bones well enough. On that first day I kept screwing that line up. It was the most embarrassing, mortifying experience of my life!

"I haven't watched [the episode] in a long time," she continued. "But I can see the terror in my eyes. I don't think anybody else ever remarked on it, but I can see my eyes are like, 'I can get through this!'"

Rumours swirled at the time that Picard might be killed off due to contract negotiations



"Borg at six o'clock!" "No sorry, I'm busy then."



"I can't believe you actually just said that."

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reaching an impasse between Stewart and Paramount, with Shelby brought onboard as a permanent addition and Riker taking the role of captain – but Dennehy says that was never raised with her. “Nobody said anything to me at the time. It was just a job and I was just a guest star. I only heard rumours about that after it was the end of the season,” she recalled.

LASER FOCUS

One of the most iconic moments in *Star Trek* history is undoubtedly the first appearance of an assimilated Picard as Locutus (Latin for “he who has spoken”). This new character solved the problem of how to centralise the drama when you’re up against a race with a group mind, who by definition have no leader. The writers had mulled over creating a Queen – an idea later realised in the feature film *Star Trek: First Contact*, but on this occasion Piller chose instead to make Picard the villain.

The task of crafting this iconic new character fell to Michael Westmore Snr, the make-up artist whose credits included films such as *Rocky* and *Mask* (for which he won an Academy Award). Westmore, who supervised the make-up for all 10 Borg on set, needed a way to make their leader stand out. His son Michael Jnr – who created all the electronics for the make-up appliances on the show – came to the rescue. “He found a newly developed two-inch laser that had only been seen in one other show prior to *Star Trek*,” Westmore Snr said. “He mounted it on the appliance that was adhered to the right side of Patrick’s head, at eye level. Wherever Locutus would look, the laser would follow. We knew that with a little smoke in the air we could see the laser’s bright red beam cut through the mist, but had no idea what would happen if Patrick looked directly into the camera lens.

“On the director’s word, Locutus swings his head and points the laser beam directly into the camera lens. We had no idea what the results would be until the next day, when production would view the results on film. The following day I received a phone call from Rick Berman,

“With a little smoke in the air we could see the laser’s red beam cut through the mist”

our producer, who said, ‘The laser scene is incredible.’” To complete the look, Westmore also used a small windscreen wiper, which moved independently just above Stewart’s eye.

“Its purpose was to add motion as he was being assimilated, and another Borg attachment to his character without covering up either of his eyes,” he said.

One of the most famous incidents in all of *Trek* lore took

place in this episode, yet due to budgetary constraints it wasn’t shown on-screen. “There are tools now that you didn’t have back then,” says Michael Okuda. “A lot of the genius of *Star Trek*’s production is how our writers, going back to Gene Roddenberry, would say, ‘Okay, these are our production constraints. We want to tell a show about the vastness of the cosmos and space



“So it’s like this, with the arm right out, see.”



“What are these things you call... emotions?”



“Go on, feel that. Yep. And I don’t even work out.”

adventures, but we actually can’t afford to show very much of it’. And one of the ways they figured to do that was in ‘The Best Of Both Worlds Part II’, where you wanted to have this tremendous battle: the Battle of Wolf 359.”

This was the location where Starfleet chose to make its stand against the rampaging Borg Cube. A fleet consisting of 40 Federation starships engaged the solitary Cube near Wolf 359 (a real star).

The battle was a disaster for the Federation, with the fleet massacred, due in part to the tactical knowledge and experience of Captain Picard, now part of the Borg collective consciousness.

Although part of the battle was shown in the *Deep Space Nine* pilot ‘Emissary’ three years later, finances meant it couldn’t actually be shown in ‘The Best Of Both Worlds’.

“It was gonna be a big episode anyway,” Okuda recalled, “so they couldn’t show a big *Star Wars*-style space battle. Or at least, if we did that, then you can’t do other things. So Michael Piller’s brilliant, dramatic solution was: we don’t see the battle, we see the aftermath. And your



A CHANCE OF SHOWERS

How Michael Okuda and
co pranked the fans



The conclusion to 'The Best Of Both Worlds' cliffhanger resolved with a "Bobby Ewing from *Dallas*" kind of twist... or so some fans were mischievously led to believe.

With debate raging among Trekkies during the summer hiatus between Part One and Part Two about how the story was going to be resolved, Michael Okuda and his colleagues in the art department decided to have some fun, by creating a fake script page and inserting it into the genuine one.

This fake page had a scene reminiscent of the infamous "Bobby Ewing in the shower" moment. Ewing, a popular character in the soap opera *Dallas*, had been killed off, but with producers wanting to reverse the decision, he later appeared in wife Pam's shower, with his death and much of the previous season's stories written off as a dream.

Okuda deliberately left the script lying around in the art department, and it was promptly pilfered, later finding its way onto fan bulletin boards. "I think it was either Picard or Riker in a sonic shower, and Q just appears and says, 'Surprise!'" Okuda said. "It was fascinating to see that even in those early, pre-World Wide Web days, it propagated out there!"



brain kind of fills that in and goes, 'Wow, this must have been amazing.'"

So Okuda and his team created a 'graveyard' scene for later in the episode. As the Enterprise reached Wolf 359 they were met by the burning and twisted hulks of what was left of the fleet. Many of those ships had been cobbled together as 'kitbash' models, with bits of other models recycled and glued onto others to give the appearance of a variety of starship designs.

SIMPLY THE BEST

'The Best Of Both Worlds' is still revered by fans, with the events it depicted still reverberating in *Trek* today, notably in *Star Trek: Picard*. The *Washington Post* ranked it as the best episode of all *Star Trek*, and said it had the greatest cliffhanger in television history. The episode also won two Emmy Awards, for outstanding sound mixing and outstanding Sound Editing.

Elizabeth Dennehy, now a high school theatre teacher, says the attitude of fans to Shelby has changed over the years, from outright hatred to a newfound appreciation. "It wasn't

always the way, but what I hear now is, 'I love Shelby. You weren't afraid of taking the guys down, you weren't afraid of being right. You were brave, you were smart'. I think it's the role that I'm most known for. So yeah, I'm really grateful for it."

"At the time, we were so busy on *Star Trek*," Okuda added. "We were doing 26 episodes a year and then we were making 52 episodes a year. But it's really fun to look back and say, 'Hey, remember when we did *that*?'"



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ESSENTIAL RETRO SCI-FI READING MATERIAL

DANGEROUS VISIONS. FROM FICTION SET
SHORTLY AFTER TOMORROW TO STORIES OF
THE FAR FUTURE, HERE ARE 11 BOOKS
REPRESENTING THE BEST OF LITERARY SF

WORDS: JONATHAN WRIGHT

You want to read more science fiction. Good idea. But where to begin? For at least two reasons, this is a deceptively tricky question to answer. First up, there's a lot of science fiction literature.

If you take Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* from 1666, a utopian tale of a kingdom on another world, as a starting point, this is a literary tradition that reaches back to the year of the Great Fire of London. Then follow that tradition through *Frankenstein*, Jules Verne, HG Wells, the pulps, modernism, the American Golden Age, comics, the 1960s New Wave and cyberpunk, and the breadth of material to choose between becomes clear.

The second problem is that discussing which of these texts is somehow essential with an SF fan is, of course, to start an argument. Was Robert A Heinlein of *Starship Troopers* fame, for instance, really one of the Golden Age's greatest writers? Or was he a sexist pig with some iffy libertarian ideas? Or maybe those two descriptions needn't be mutually exclusive?

Nevertheless, you need to start somewhere, so here is our choice of retro sci-fi reading material to get you started. It's not definitive but it will (we hope) point you directly to some fantastic books and provide multiple launch pads for further reading.

FOUNDATION ISAAC ASIMOV

Galaxy-sized notions

1951

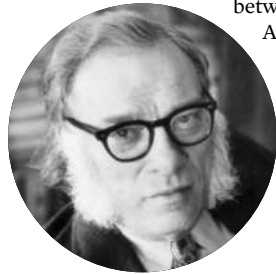
Science fiction, it's often said, is a literature of ideas. And they don't get much bigger than the notion underpinning *Foundation* by Isaac Asimov (1920-1992): that psychohistory, a field mixing history, sociology and statistics, might help mankind predict the future, even the imminent collapse of a seemingly all-powerful Galactic Empire.

It's a notion that has permeated the wider culture. In 2009, the Nobel laureate economist Paul Krugman at the 67th World Science Fiction Convention name-checked Asimov's psychohistorian Hari Seldon as an inspiration in his own studies; Krugman's point was that economics was the field of study closest to psychohistory. More generally, our digital age is underpinned by numbers, many produced by patterns in human behaviour across vast data sets.



As for *Foundation* itself, the opening volume in a trilogy later expanded into a series, it's a book that betrays Asimov's roots in the pulp era. Not only did it begin life as a series of short stories in *Astounding Science Fiction* between 1942 and 1950, but

Asimov's prose is functional, with style and character development playing second fiddle to the plot. But what a plot: a vast future history that riffs off Edward Gibbon's *History Of The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire* to fine effect.



THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS

JOHN WYNDHAM

When greenery attacks...

1951

It's been adapted multiple times for the screen and radio, but the first novel published by John Wyndham (1903-1969) under his own name has never been universally admired. For novelist Brian Aldiss, who was central to SF's New Wave of the 1960s, it was a prime example of a "cosy catastrophe" where the main characters seem surprisingly unaffected by navigating a post-apocalyptic world.

You can see what Aldiss means, in that Wyndham's tale of newly blinded people wandering around a Britain where lethal greenery prowls, has a stolid, 'mustn't grumble', meat-and-potatoes quality.

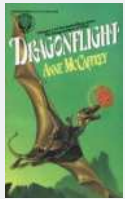
And yet one reason *Triffids* has so often been adapted is that there is something eerie about the book, notably when Wyndham draws on his own Second World War experiences as a fire watcher during the Blitz in describing London in the wake of disaster. There was, it's clear, nothing cosy about what Wyndham experienced. A book that updates HG Wells' *War Of The Worlds* (1898) and which has, in turn, influenced those who have subsequently imagined catastrophic societal breakdown, including Alex Garland, whose screenplay for zippy-zombie chiller *28 Days Later* drew on Wyndham's work.



DRAGONFLIGHT ANNE MCCAFFREY

Big beasts, best friends

1968



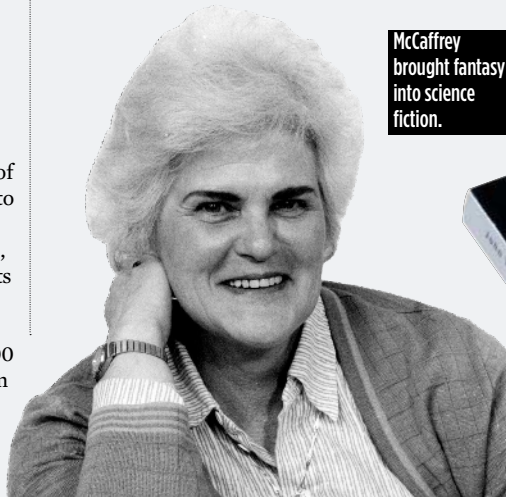
The term science fiction fantasy is now ubiquitous, a reflection of how SF and fantasy have intermingled. Yet in 1968, when the first volume in the *Dragonriders of Pern* sequence by Anne McCaffrey (1926-2011) was published, stories that

melded science fiction and fantasy certainly weren't commonplace.

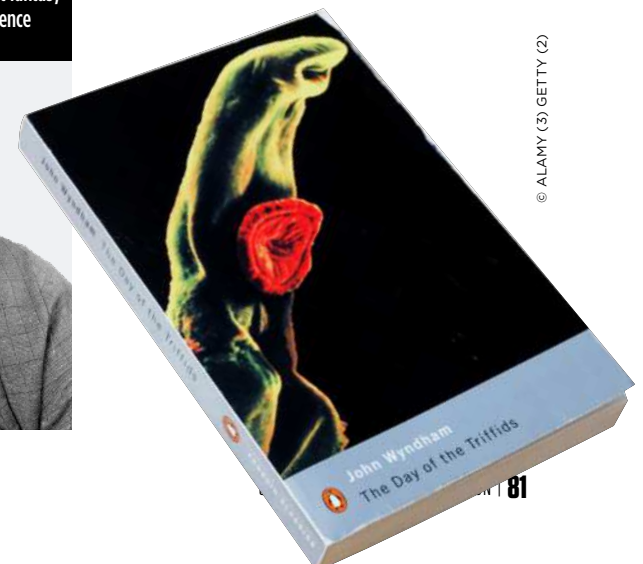
The sequence imagines what might happen if spacefaring settlers were to find their new home, Pern, was periodically subject to bombardment by Thread, an organics-devouring spore originating from a neighbouring planet, the Red Star. It's the job of fire-breathing dragons, telepathically bonded to human riders and (we later learn) creatures genetically engineered from native fire-lizards, to burn away the Thread. McCaffrey constructs an intricate future-history that relates how, in facing an existential threat, the settlers' technological base was degraded so that, c2,500 years later when *Dragonflight* is set, they live in an agrarian society.

Despite the fantastical setting and setup, *Dragonflight* is vividly believable, its science

underpinned by McCaffrey taking advice from reproductive biologist Jack Cohen, who later co-authored *The Science Of Discworld* with Terry Pratchett and mathematician Ian Stewart. *Dragonflight* was also important in bringing female readers to SF. Editors and publishers, McCaffrey later reflected, took her seriously, but the same could not be said of unreconstructed male readers. Idiots.



McCaffrey brought fantasy into science fiction.



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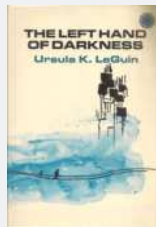


Ursula K Le Guin's *Left Hand of Darkness* is a key text.

THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS URSULA K LE GUIN

Galaxy-sized notions

1969



More than any other major writer of the 20th century, Ursula K Le Guin (1929-2018) challenged the assumptions and conventions of genre fiction. With *A Wizard Of Earthsea* (1968) and its sequels, she had fantasy fiction in her sights. By making her haunted protagonist, Ged, dark-skinned, she rebuked those who lazily set stories in faux-medieval worlds filled with characters white readers would assume also to be white.

Yet she never went about her work in a hectoring tone. Rather, Le Guin was a storyteller first and foremost, something reflected by *Earthsea* being widely regarded as a classic of children's fiction.

She followed it up a year later with another book equally as good, this time working within science fiction. *The Left Hand Of Darkness* takes place in Le Guin's Hainish universe, a future where human societies on planets orbiting

different stars – including Terra, or Earth – are making contact with each other as they seek to re-establish a lapsed galactic civilisation.

But diplomacy is a delicate matter, as Terran Genly Ai learns when he is sent as an envoy to the planet of Gethen. Here, his understanding of the society he sees is undermined by grappling with the Gethens being ambisexual, of no fixed sex.

To say Le Guin was conducting a thought experiment, in which she is in showing us a world without men or women, runs the risk of making *The Left Hand Of Darkness* sound unapproachable and austere. But without suggesting it's an easy novel – Le Guin herself noted of the book, "Its structure is complex, it moves slowly" – it fizzles with intellectual energy. A key work in 20th-century SF, one of the foundational works of feminist science fiction and, more than half a century after it was first published, a novel finding new resonances at a time when gender-fluid and queer voices are making themselves heard.

CRASH JG BALLARD

Driven to death

1973

As recounted in her autobiography, future Nobel Laureate Doris Lessing once attended a meeting of the editorial board of science fiction magazine *New Worlds*, a weekly event at that time held at the White Horse on Fetter Lane, off Fleet Street. She wasn't impressed by the "masculine atmosphere".

Later, she realised, "My disappointment with what I thought of as a dull group of people, suburban, provincial, was my fault. In that prosaic room, in that very ordinary pub, was going on the most advanced thinking in this country."

Lessing's words were never truer than when Michael Moorcock was the magazine's editor and, latterly, publisher, years when *New Worlds* was the house magazine of sci-fi's New Wave. Wholly unconcerned with making SF respectable (a preoccupation of Brian Aldiss), Moorcock instead turned *New Worlds* into a forum for new and experimental writing, including his own as, for example, he gave the world the hipster adventurer Jerry Cornelius, who made his first appearance in

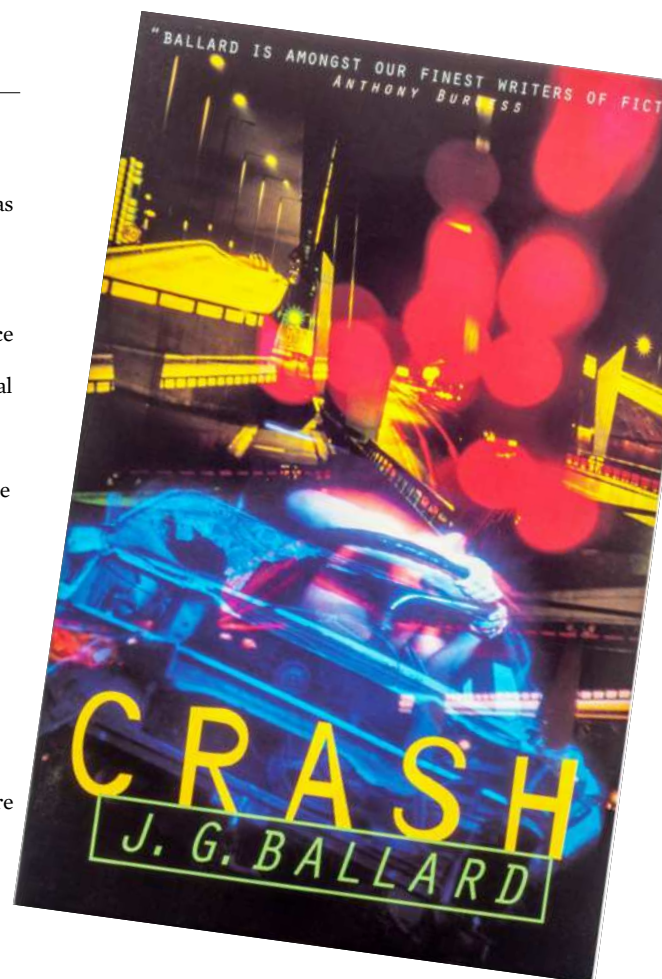


The Final Programme (1968, although it was written in 1965, it was considered, Moorcock has said, "too freaky" by publishers).

While the two men were very different in character, Moorcock's friend JG Ballard (1940-2009), a regular *New Worlds* contributor, was a central figure in exploring an artistic space that also interested Moorcock. Which is to say "inner space", defined by Ballard as "the internal landscape of tomorrow that is a transmuted image of the past, and one of the most fruitful areas for the imaginative writer".

In looking inwards to the darkest nooks of the human psyche, Ballard wrote books that pushed out to the limits of what others considered publishable. Famously, one publisher's reader reported of *Crash*, Ballard's novel of car-crash sexual fetishism, "This author is beyond psychiatric help. Do Not Publish!"

Subsequently, *Crash* has been reassessed, a book that's undoubtedly disturbing yet chillingly finds, in the words of Zadie Smith, "a sweet spot where dystopia and utopia converge".

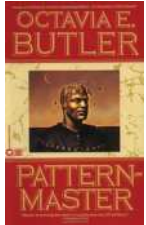


PATTERNMASTER

OCTAVIA E BUTLER

Hidden narrative

1976



The idea of secret histories is woven into SFF's fabric. But few have worked from this trope with quite the aplomb of Octavia E. Butler (1947-2006). Her *Patternist* series builds up into a narrative that links the Ancient Egyptian era to the distant future.

Butler's triumph is to do this while also exploring themes of power and how it's (mis) used, inequality, what it means to be human, what it takes to survive and, less overtly but so often present in her writing, Afrofuturism. Confusingly, *Patternmaster* is chronologically the last in the sequence but the first to be written. Regardless of the timeline, it's a fine introduction to Butler's work.



THE AIRTIGHT GARAGE

JEAN GIRAUD/MOEBIUS

Open strangeness

1976-1979



Appearing first in the Franco-Belgian comic *Métal Hurlant*, *The Airtight Garage* by Moebius, aka Jean Giraud (1938-2012), has latterly collected into a graphic novel. Initially entitled *Le Garage Hermétique de Jerry*

Cornelius, it featured Michael Moorcock's urban adventurer, for all the JC moniker doesn't appear in later editions because of a misunderstanding when Moebius mistakenly thought Moorcock didn't like the work. (Not true.)

For anyone who thinks of graphic novels largely in terms of superheroes, here's proof you can tell all sorts of stories within the form, including a largely made-up-on-the-fly science fiction narrative featuring an asteroid that hosts a pocket universe.



“Butler's *Patternist* builds up into a narrative that links the Ancient Egyptian era to the distant future”

WATCHMEN

ALAN MOORE

Reimagining superheroes

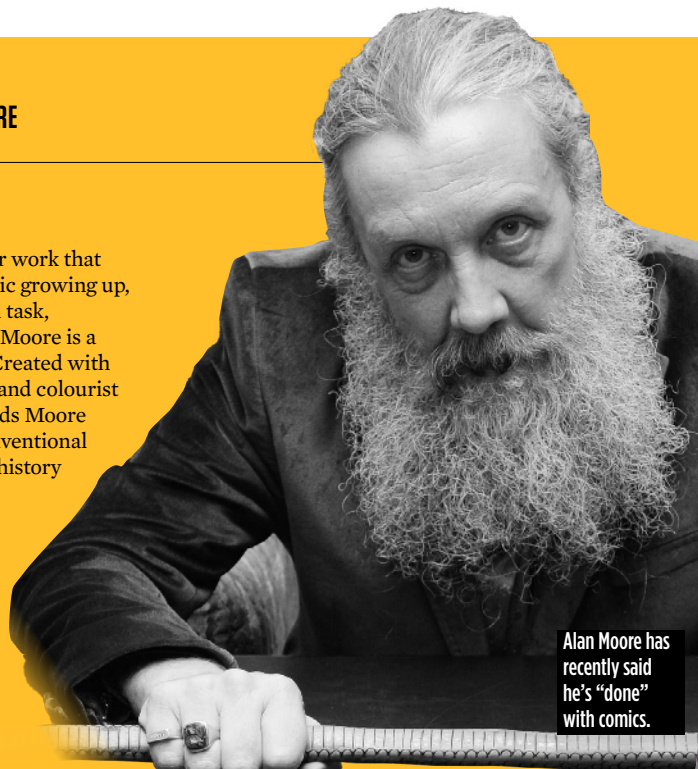
1986-1987



If you're looking for work that represents the comic growing up, in truth a perennial task, *Watchmen* by Alan Moore is a strong contender. Created with artist Dave Gibson and colourist John Higgins, it finds Moore deconstructing conventional

superhero narratives by rewriting history so that the emergence of caped crusaders dramatically alters the real-world timeline.

It's the starting point for a narrative that's satirical, experimental, and has much to say about the anxieties of the 1980s in the years before the fall of the Iron Curtain – and indeed the anxieties of today.



Alan Moore has recently said he's “done” with comics.

Pulp fiction

Why SF owes its popularity to cheap paper and sensationalism

Conventional literary histories are often concerned with great writers and great books. But for all that, say, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948) clearly belongs in the SF canon, science fiction has rarely been respectable. And why would it want to be? Deep down, however people experiment with sci-fi, it's popular fiction. Moreover, telling the story of literary science fiction in terms of novels offers at best a partial picture.

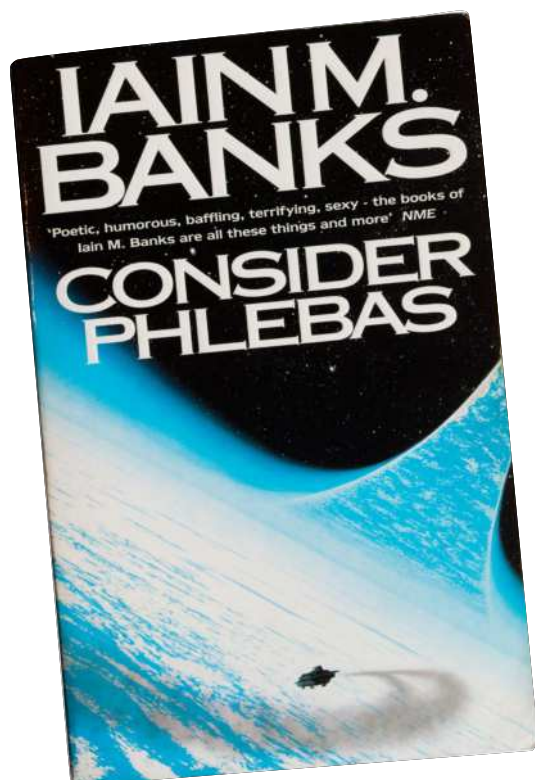
In particular, it's important to understand that magazines – pulps, named because they were printed on cheap paper – drove sci-fi's 20th-century evolution by offering writers an outlet. While *Weird Tales* (1923) dealt in horror-tinged fantasy, the first truly science fiction-focused magazine was *Amazing Stories*, launched by Experimenter Publishing in 1926, and which subsequently published the first stories by the likes of Ursula K Le Guin and Roger Zelazny.

But if you're looking for one magazine that illustrates the importance of SF magazines, it's *Astounding Stories Of Super-Science* (1930, although the title's name has changed down the years), which under the editorship of John W Campbell was strongly associated with the Golden Age via its publication of, for example, the *Foundation* stories and work by Robert A Heinlein.

Just as importantly, in the days before the internet, fans often found each other via magazines. No pulps, no sci-fi community as we know it today.

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CONSIDER PHLEBAS IAIN M BANKS

Space opera revised

1987

It shouldn't exist, but there's a hierarchy within genres. Top of the pile is literary fiction. Imagine the shock then when, after enjoying breakout success *The Wasp Factory* (1984), lit-fic rising star Iain M Banks (1954-2013) unleashed *Consider Phlebas*. Here was a novel that was, whichever way you looked at it, indisputably a space opera, a tale of the Idiran-Culture War, a galaxy-spanning conflict between civilisations with radically different perspectives on the cosmos.

And yet taking its title from TS Eliot's *The Waste Land*, this was nothing like the kind of space opera where huge starships gun for each other in encounters that recall the Second World War in the Pacific. This was because Banks was heavily influenced by the New Wave and, in particular, M John Harrison's *Centauri Device* (1974).

Ironically enough, this was a book the then literary editor of *New Worlds* initially thought of as an anti-space opera, which can be seen, for example, in the way its main character, a 24th-century space captain, John Truck, is at the

centre of events yet he's more of a witness than a go-getting protagonist.

Despite this, Harrison's take on space opera inspired not just Banks but the likes of Ken MacLeod, Justina Robson and Alastair Reynolds. In the case of Banks specifically, *Consider Phlebas* was the first novel in his loosely linked series where the stories were usually set on the margins of the Culture, a post-scarcity society its creator regarded as a utopian – and which gave him ample opportunity to dream up elaborately humorous names for sentient starships.

As for Harrison, having paid a kind of deconstructed space opera forwards, he was inspired to return to SF with *Light* (2002), an eerie tale where one of the main characters, physicist Michael Kearney, is a serial killer. Reviewing the novel for *The Guardian*, Banks passed back the baton as he called it “a novel of full-spectrum literary dominance”.



BROWN GIRL IN THE RING NALO HOPKINSON

Reimagining the city

1998



Brown Girl in the Ring was Nalo Hopkinson's first novel.

The actor and raconteur Peter Ustinov once memorably likened Toronto to “New York run by the Swiss”. Which is to say a city where everything works efficiently but, Ustinov also seems to hint knowingly, rather less exciting than the Big Apple. *Brown Girl In The Ring*

by Nalo Hopkinson offers a very different take on Canada's business and financial centre.

Set in the wake of an economic collapse, it shows an inner city that has become a slum, a place isolated by roadblocks from communities that used to be its suburbs, North York,

Scarborough and Etobicoke. Downtown is an area ruled by gang leader Rudy Sheldon and his thugs, whose power is challenged by Hopkinson's heroine, Ti-Jeanne, after her child's father, Tony, is drawn into a scheme involving murder most foul and the harvesting of a human heart.

While it is sometimes described as an urban fantasy, then a popular subgenre, Hopkinson's debut is also a science fiction novel in its premise and its post-apocalyptic setting. But crucially, this is SF that seemed new and fresh because it took its cues not just from Canada, where Hopkinson lived between 1977 and 2011, but from Jamaica, where she was born, and Guyana in South America, where she was raised.

It was of course by no means the first sci-fi novel to draw on non-North American and European influences – and indeed there's a danger of assuming the history of literary SF has been written by white men because there's even now still such a lack of awareness of other science fiction traditions. Nevertheless, Hopkinson's novel arrived at a moment when more and more stories rooted in non-western traditions were finding their way through.

This is still an ongoing process and Hopkinson's take on science fiction in *Brown Girl* and in subsequent novels – feminist, Afrofuturist, deeply engaged with social issues – makes her a key figure in this process. She's also a brilliant writer.

NEUROMANCER WILLIAM GIBSON

Future noir now

1984

One of the biggest misapprehensions that people who don't read science fiction have is that it's concerned with predicting the future. In truth, as with all artists, science fiction writers are, or at least should be, primarily engaged with the world as it is.

And yet there are science fiction writers who somehow seem to have a particularly acute sense of where to look in the present for clues as to what the future might hold. Arguably on the strength of *Neuromancer* alone, cyberpunk luminary William Gibson is chief among these. For those who have somehow ignored the digital revolution, this is because Gibson's debut, despite being written in a panic against a deadline by a man uncertain whether he had the writerly chops to complete a full-length novel, seemed to anticipate so much of the world we now inhabit.

It was Gibson who coined the term cyberspace (in the 1982 short story *Burning Chrome*). It was Gibson who offered up archetypal hacker antiheroes in drug addict Case and 'Razorgirl' Molly Millions. It was Gibson who gave SF writers the licence to have characters speak in the laconic street slang of noir where throwaway remarks can convey huge meaning.

And if it was *Blade Runner* (1982) – interestingly, adapted from *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K Dick, a writer from an earlier whose work has similarly eerie qualities to Gibson's – that showed us how the future might look, it was Gibson who, having repeatedly rewritten the first two-thirds of *Neuromancer* to avoid being accused of ripping off the textures of Ridley Scott's film, made us feel what it might be like to move through such cityscapes.

Indeed, so big has been *Neuromancer's* influence that you need to be careful of assuming Gibson was predicting things when what really happened was that people read his work and thought it was cool. (Keanu Reeves as Neo inevitably springs to mind here.)

More seriously, one of Gibson's abiding interests is the sheer weirdness that so often surrounds us and which, especially in his later fiction, books set in the near future or recent past, Gibson highlights again and again. It's this, you suspect, that explains the sense of anticipation that, more than 35 years after *Neuromancer*, still greets the arrival of a William Gibson novel. It's the recurring idea that Gibson will make us see the present day anew – again.



Neuromancer is the first book in William Gibson's *Sprawl* trilogy.

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THE
ORIGINAL
SCIENCE FICTION
NOVEL CELEBRATES ITS
BICENTENNIAL. JOSEPH
MCCABE CRIES “IT’S ALIVE!”

IT’S THE URTEXT OF SCIENCE FICTION. THE Rosetta stone. The book responsible for the genre’s vocabulary – establishing its themes and announcing its promise.

Tales of speculative fiction were told before *Frankenstein*, or, *The Modern Prometheus* was first published two centuries ago, on 1 January 1818. It was author Mary Shelley, however, who launched SF as a viable means of mainstream storytelling. Before HG Wells wrote of Martians invading Earth, before Jules Verne made Captain Nemo the scourge of the planet’s oceans, a teenage girl conceived of a man, Victor Frankenstein, who tried to create life, but instead birthed a monster.

Shelley’s story began in June of 1816, when she and her husband, the Romantic poet Percy Shelley, challenged each other and their friends Lord Byron and Doctor John Polidori to frighten each other with original ghost stories over the course of three days at Villa Diodati, Byron’s mansion in Switzerland. Shelley’s life had been one plagued by death. Her mother, the feminist pioneer Mary



Wollstonecraft, had died when she was just two weeks old, and the 18-year-old had been devastated by the recent loss of her infant son. The tale she told was of someone who sought to conquer death.

PLAYING GOD

Speaking with *SFX* magazine, Dr Sorcha Ní Fhlainn – a Senior Lecturer in Film Studies and a founding member of the Manchester Centre for Gothic Studies at the city's Metropolitan University – explained the forces that were at work in Shelley's mind...

"The idea of death and reanimation and the creation of something that could be monstrous but is not fully capable of living – in so far as it's a stillbirth – that was a huge issue for her. Her maternal pangs, if you will. This is something that she ties into *Frankenstein*. Because the will to make something live doesn't mean that it should. That's something that Frankenstein grapples with. Particularly when he beholds his creation and he discovers that he's not willing to take responsibility for what he has done, and for what the actual giving of life entails. The pitfalls

A young Mary Shelley puts quill to paper.

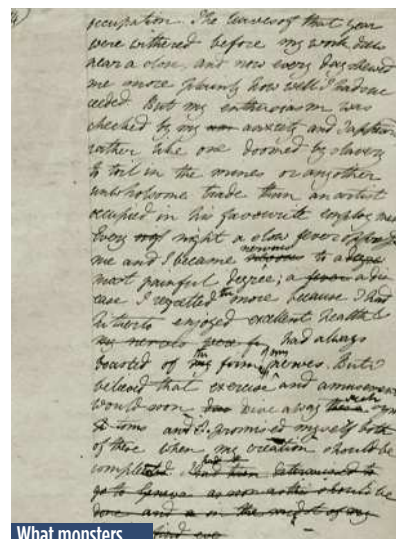


of it. That biographical element informs the psychological drive behind that story.

"Mary was also interested in the idea of galvanising life. So the alchemical origins of how to bring things to life that were non-living, that's something that fascinated her from a scientific and philosophical perspective. Considering her father was [the political philosopher] William Godwin, that makes sense that she would have those kinds of inquiries and those fascinations with science and the limits of life, and the theological and philosophical elements of that.

"What's really interesting about the creature," added the scholar, "is that by making him a creation outside of God or outside of the natural order, even though his body parts are selected to be beautiful, when they're stitched together and brought to life they're made hideous. So already the idea of making him something that can be falsely beautiful, when that's brought to life it's something horrific. It's something that is absolutely against what is natural and normal. So even his body is a collection of bits that don't really work in terms of natural creation. You see the hodgepodge, and you see that all the bits work and all the bits can be put together, but when they're put together it's actually hideous. It's incapable of being alive."

Three separate editions of the novel were published in Shelley's lifetime. Although the original 1818 edition was published anonymously, the author's name was added in 1822 (the year of



What monsters lurk within Mary Shelley's writing?



LABOUR PAINS

Not all Frankenstein adaptations are created equal...



If you need evidence that a film shouldn't adhere too closely to the book on which it's based, look no further than director Kenneth Branagh's 1994 misfire, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Starring Branagh as Victor Frankenstein and Robert De Niro as the creature, it's the most faithful of all Frankenstein adaptations, but loses the book's spirit in a sea of histrionics. It does, however, yield one memorable scene...

"The monster," recalled Dr Sorcha Ní Fhlainn, "has just been brought to life, and Branagh and the monster wrestle in this amniotic fluid. It's just so excessively visually homoerotic and gooey. That was a good touch by Branagh, because it's nowhere in the novel."

Percy's death). In 1831, Shelley published a revised edition.

"The definitive version is the 1818 edition," said Ní Fhlainn, "because it is as she realised it. I think she was lacking in confidence as a writer, even though you wouldn't find that on the page. But she was feeling that she was in the shadow of her mother, her father. They were the literary/creative stock from which she came. She was surrounded by Shelley and Byron and Polidori. She was in great company, but she was in company that was determined to shape the future. So there was ambition most certainly in that group. Hence why you have that line that Victor gives to Walton, 'Beware ambition.' This is



Christopher Lee
lurches onward
in *The Curse Of
Frankenstein*.

you're domesticated. Because you're going to not give into that dark half of yourself... If you watch the film, you see that it's very much using that kind of doubled imagery. You see the creature destroyed, because you see his reflection is caught in a mirror and he's able to be overcome that way."

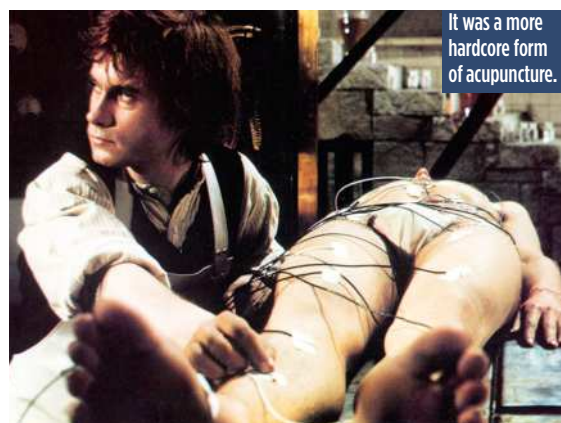
The most iconic screen adaptation of Shelley's novel remains Universal's 1931 *Frankenstein*, featuring an uncredited Boris Karloff as the creature. Directed by a gay Englishman, James Whale, it focuses on society's frequent disdain for the Other.

"What's interesting about that is that the line that's so central to the core pieces of the novel, the line, 'It's alive! Now I know what it feels like to be God!' – Colin Clive's line – was originally censored. Because it's too outrageous. It was anathema to the censorship board that you would claim anything to be ungodly in that capacity, and that there's no sort of regret for that... Boris Karloff's creature, he represents the idea of the creature being misunderstood.

Whale really softens the image of the creature to make it palatable on screen. Also, I think that Whale sympathised with the monster. Shelley doesn't really sympathise with the monster the same way. She makes him out to be clever, but hideous and rejected and bitter. Karloff doesn't even get the opportunity to be all those things. Especially once he drowns little Maria. Then we have that culmination of anxiety with the townspeople going out to hound him at the end.

"Later Frankensteins," explains Ní Fhlainn, "tend to get adapted out as many creature features do... 1957's *The Curse Of Frankenstein* is a really good Hammer film. That one definitely takes on the Hammer tropes. Hammer always reduces these gothic stories into almost household plays or dramas. Then in the 1970s you get *Young Frankenstein*, which is a classic, and *Blackenstein*, a Blaxploitation version of *Frankenstein*. The one I really like, and it's really different, is *Flesh For Frankenstein*, produced by Andy Warhol. I like that one because it kind of does what other films are afraid to do. It makes it all meaty and sticky. That's kind of getting back to what Shelley was doing. It shows the stitching and the goo and that there's a bitterness to this end.

"There's a couple of versions in the 1980s where it goes away from the *Frankenstein* parable, but you still have it. *Blade Runner*'s really close to *Frankenstein*. *Edward Scissorhands* is a gentle version of it. There's *Frankenhooker*. There's loads of them. It's even in *American Horror Story*. A couple of seasons ago they had a Frankenstein character. She was sewn together and brought back to life. So it depends on the film and depends on the genre, but you do see



It was a more
hardcore form
of acupuncture.

something that can lead to great hubris... Yes, the 1818 edition is the one that scholars tend to return to. In terms of the differences between them, there's a little bit of polish and rewrite, but the guts of the story are absolutely the same."

SCREAM QUEEN

While two theatrical adaptations of the novel were produced before Shelley passed away in 1851, the 20th century saw numerous films inspired by her masterwork, each one appropriating it for their era – starting with Edison Studios' loose 1910 adaptation, directed by J Searle Dawley and starring Charles Ogle as the monster.

"Edison's certainly is the face of psychoanalysis. The face of your doubled self, and the monstrosity you're capable of. You need to be domesticated and saved by the power of marriage and being bound to a woman. Your terrible deeds are now being controlled because

CREATURE FEATURES

We pick our favorite takes on Shelley...

FRANKENSTEIN/ BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN

Director James Whale told Shelley's tale across two film masterpieces. Released in 1931 and 1935, both star Boris Karloff in his signature role.



ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN

The original horror comedy, this 1948 vehicle for the titular comedy duo marked the end of Universal's classic monster cycle.



THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN

Hammer's 1957 game-changer, directed by Terence Fisher, began Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing's reign as the kings of horror.



YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN

Mel Brooks and Gene Wilder's 1974 comedy remains one of the most perfect film spoofs ever created. Then it was adapted to a musical that's had a few successful runs.



that it gets modified quite significantly across the 20th century."

As for *why* Shelley's novel has endured so many retellings over two centuries, Ní Fhlainn tells us, "It's the celebrated beginning of science fiction. So far as the idea of that collision between science and the natural world and the transgression that produces; in terms of usurping God and usurping a woman's place in reproduction. It challenges a lot of thinking. You're removing the theological from the idea of creating life. It becomes that really important outpost for science having this ability to create and to bring about wonders. But what are the price of those wonders?

"That's the big question behind the novel. That's something that you always come into contact with when you're talking about science fiction, especially with HG Wells or Jules Verne. You have all these issues around – 'At what cost, at what price, am I actually paying for this miracle I found, this wonder I have discovered?' And you get that a lot across the later 19th century. Mary Shelley's really that beacon, that outpost, at the beginning of the 19th century."

© GETTY (9)



A
SPACE
ODYSSEY

2017 marked the centenary of **ARTHUR C CLARKE**. Jonathan Wright looks back at the life and times of the SF Grand Master





ONLY MILD RISK OF HYPERBOLE, TO try to imagine science fiction without the contribution of Arthur C Clarke is to imagine a wholly different universe. Co-creator of *2001: A Space Odyssey*; the Brit “Big Three” novelist whose reputation matched and surpassed Robert A Heinlein and Isaac Asimov; and public intellectual futurist before we even knew there was such a job, Clarke’s fame extended, and still extends, far beyond the field.

“It’s amazing the amount of people who have actually heard of Arthur in some context,” said Tom Hunter, director of the Arthur C Clarke Award. “They might not be familiar with his work, but that legacy and knowledge of him as an individual is definitely there.”

But, as we have surpassed the centenary of Clarke’s birth, we wonder: how did this happen? How did a grammar school boy from Minehead in Somerset come to occupy such a privileged place in the wider culture? Where else to begin to answer such a question than out beyond the atmosphere – or, more accurately, the simulacrum of space that Stanley Kubrick, with Clarke’s input, created for *2001*.

Even in a movie shot through with dazzling images, one sequence in particular lingers in the memory. As we watch a shuttle approach a spinning space station, Johann Strauss’s *Blue Danube* waltz plays. It’s awe-inspiring in that it evokes both wonder and, perhaps because there’s a clinical quality to this vision of space travel, a shiver of fear. In a world where colour television was still a novelty, Kubrick and Clarke didn’t just tell us about the future, they *showed* us what it looked like in widescreen. We’ve never quite been the same since.

“My dad took us to see *2001* at the Abbey Cinerama in Liverpool on first appearance,” remembered novelist Stephen Baxter, Clarke’s co-writer in his later years. “I was 10 going on 11, I guess. Mind duly blown. I think I understood very little, but I do remember it vividly – the music especially hit me, and my dad bought the *Zarathustra* theme as a 45rpm single!”

Considering *2001* was in key respects the apotheosis of Clarke’s career, it’s probably no coincidence that it was being created – along with a novel that, Hunter said, was “like an instruction manual to interpret the [movie’s ambiguous] ending” – around the time Clarke turned 50. A middle-aged man, he brought broad experience to the cosmic theme of, in Hunter’s words, “humanity’s place in a broader universe”.

To return to that grammar school boy in Minehead, Clarke was a stargazer, a fossil collector and an avid reader of American pulp magazines. As a teenager, he joined the Junior Astronomical Association and, as a contributor to society journal *Urania*, persuaded editor Marion Eadie to add an astronautics section.

During the Second World War, Clarke was a radar specialist with the RAF. When the conflict ended, he gained a first-class degree in mathematics and physics from King’s College, London. He served twice as chairman of the British Planetary Society. Kicking off his life as a futurist, he popularised the idea of geostationary satellites, explaining in *Wireless World* how they could be used in telecommunications more than a decade before Sputnik I was launched. He also wrote non-fiction books we’d now probably describe as pop science.

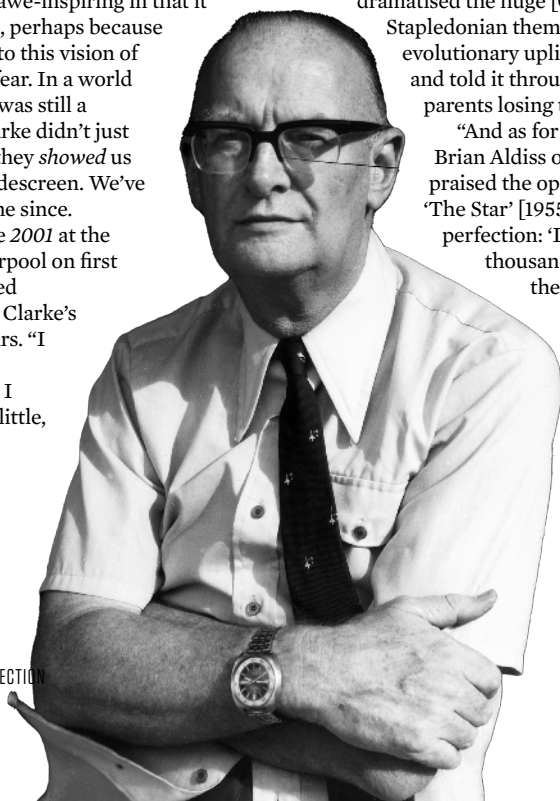
TALES OF TEN WORLDS

In 1951, after having sold his first short stories to *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1946, he became a full-time writer. In keeping with its pulp roots, Clarke’s fiction is often portrayed as a little, well, workaday. But this, according to Stephen Baxter, is a simplification. “I have a theory that, with time, he will be recognised as a much better writer than is maybe the consensus now,” he argued. “He will be remembered for his handling of huge themes, but he did have an instinct for story. Thus *Childhood’s End* [1953], in which he dramatised the huge [Olaf]

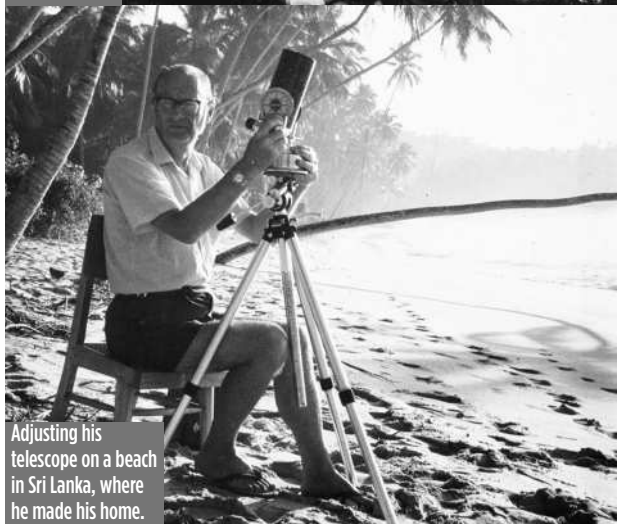
Stapledonian theme of the evolutionary uplift of mankind, and told it through the eyes of parents losing their children.

“And as for his short fiction, Brian Aldiss of fond memory praised the opening line of ‘The Star’ [1955] as near-perfection: ‘It is three

thousand light-years to the Vatican.’ The immediate clash of two worldviews in one sentence – and the subtext of the story there in nine words. That is artistry.”



As a teenager in the study at his family farm in Somerset.



Adjusting his telescope on a beach in Sri Lanka, where he made his home.

It’s also important that, unlike his “Big Three” contemporaries Heinlein and Asimov, Clarke had a particularly English utopian take on science fiction that can be traced back, via Olaf Stapledon whom Clarke invited to speak at the British Interplanetary Society, to HG Wells. The contrast with the sometimes bellicose Heinlein was especially marked and the two men fell out over Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative, aka ‘Star Wars’.

“Heinlein was the voice of the updated US frontier myth that permeated mid-century SF, with all its wonder, and all its plunder,” said Baxter, “whereas Clarke followed his countryman Wells as an internationalist. He believed technology should guide us to unity and a world state, which was why he opposed Star Wars, the militarisation of space. We needed that countering voice – although to be fair to Asimov, he too had a much wider perspective.”

After *2001*, Clarke’s career entered a new phase. He was by now famous enough to be called upon by CBS to help with its TV coverage of the Apollo 11 Moon landing. In 1980, *Arthur C Clarke’s Mysterious World* was sold on Clarke’s name. There were major novels too, including *Rendezvous With Rama* (1973) and three sequels to *2001*, the sequence concluding with *3001: The Final Odyssey* (1997).

He became such an eminent figure that he would eventually be knighted (in 1998), although curiously this was one of the few times his life was touched by controversy as it coincided with an allegation of sexual misconduct by *The Sunday*



Clarke is as famous for his contributions to 'real' science as SF.

Mirror. The paper issued an apology after the charge was found to be baseless by the Sri Lankan police.

As he got older, he also passed the baton to other writers, notably by financing the Arthur C Clarke Award, which each year honours the best SF novel published in Britain. It's a gong that's sometimes criticised for being too, for want of a better term, literary, yet that's rather the point. Clarke himself, points out Baxter, became a China Miéville fan after reading him because he won the Clarke.

"Right up until the end, he was very supportive of the exact principle the award was founded on, that it would have a very broad definition of science fiction," says Hunter.

It's a remark in keeping with Clarke's curiosity about the world, which helped lead to some unlikely encounters. When Clarke met beat poet junkie William S Burroughs, Michael Moorcock recalled, the two got on famously. "Oddly, they have a lot in common, including sexual orientation, preference for drinking orange juice, interest in technical developments, dislike of rock music," noted Moorcock, wryly.

ISLANDS IN THE SKY

It's a personal insight into a man who liked to keep his private life private. Another

insight comes from his ex-secretary and sister-in-law, Dorothy Jones (formerly Clarke), who remembers Arthur as a "kind and gentle" figure who, without fuss or fanfare, often made contributions to individuals and causes he wanted to help. "I never saw him lose his temper or even get angry," she remembered. "He was very disciplined with his writing. After breakfast he would go to his typewriter and start work. When I first started working for him he wrote by hand – until he bought himself an electric typewriter! After finishing a book he would come downstairs, kick the skirting board and complain he had nothing to do, then go upstairs and start another book."

From 1956, Clarke lived in Sri Lanka. While he was briefly married, he was gay. He described Leslie Ekanayake (1947-77) as his "only perfect friend of a lifetime" in a dedication in space elevator construction epic *The Fountains Of Paradise* (1979). He was a keen scuba diver who helped locate the ruins of the ancient Koneswaram Temple off Trincomalee on Sri Lanka's east coast.

Clarke's was an eventful life, but it's the work that lingers longer in the memory than any biographical details. As Hunter says, trying to describe Clarke's exploration of Big Themes, "He's levering open the top of your head basically and expanding your brain."

ARTHURIAN MYTHS

Where to start with Arthur C Clarke's fiction

AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT (1948, 1953)

Expanded from a 1948 novella in 1951 and two years later published in book form, a tale that early on establishes Clarke as a purveyor of Big Ideas, comfortable with the idea of setting a story one billion years hence, if not yet the most accomplished writer. In 1956, Clarke revisited the manuscript yet again in a rewrite entitled *The City And The Stars*.



CHILDHOOD'S END (1953)

Another expanded shorter tale (the 1946 short story "Guardian Angel"), Clarke's first publishing success tells of the relationship between humankind and aliens known as the Overlords, who announce they're taking over to stop an extinction event. A book Clarke himself named as one of his favourites and, in 2004, was shortlisted for the 1954 Retro Hugo.



2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (1968)

You've seen the film and you're still none the wiser. Don't worry, happens to us all. Clarke's novelistic take on the same themes, written around the same time as the film, certainly helps explain the presence of a monolith in kickstarting human intelligence. Read it in conjunction with *The Lost Worlds Of 2001*, which is a kind of literary DVD bonus take on the whole project.



RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA (1973)

In the 2130s, a 50km alien starship appears in the solar system. What to do? A group of human explorers head towards the object to explore. A novel that's arguably Clarke's most satisfying in terms of matching grand theme and the craft of a mature writer. Deservedly took several major SF awards.



THE COLLECTED STORIES OF ARTHUR C CLARKE (2001)

It's easy to forget when dealing with a writer who was known for epic stories, but the pulps heavily influenced Clarke. Accordingly, just as you can arguably learn as much about, say, The Who by listening to their singles rather than their albums, don't overlook Clarke's shorter fiction. This volume collects 114 tales, arranged chronologically.



THRILLING NEW

FOURPENCE-
HALFPENNY

29 SEPTEMBER 1950 No. 25

EAGLE

EVERY DAY
19 SEPTEMBER 1950 No. 25

STILL NO NEWS FROM VE

SILENCE BLANKETS DARE'S "RANGER" RETURNS EARTH

TENSION MOUNTS IN FAMINE TROUBLE SPOTS PEKING, SICHUAN (delayed)

and Southern China in an...
ing no messages reaching here from Canton, Hong Kong and Shanghai.
The Television communications system has broken down, presumably owing to deliberate interference by many provinces as reported from Peking. Rumbling at a result of the complete collapse of the food rationing arrangements. Rumors circulate have not been removed for over two weeks in some cities.

MRS. DIGBY SAY

Mr. Digby says...

SIR HUBERT GUEST, K.C.B., Space Fleet, who accompanied the Space Fleet in 1960 for his lifetime of service land on Mars in 1965. He has made over a...

hour ago minus the...
within 1,000 miles...
mystery planet...
Earth...
the danger...

ATOR DEMANDS...
MINCAT PROBE...
for Marshall of North...
into the...
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LNO
SILENCE BLANKETS DARE'S
"RANGER" RETURNS
EARTH

TENSION MOUNTS IN FAMINE TROUBLE SPOTS

...the
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...Exxon
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MRS. DIGBY SAYS

OTHER NEWS

SUCCESS IN PEANUT AR

**VETERAN
SPACEMAN
IN MISSING
EXPEDITION**

SIR HUBERT GUEST, K.C.B., O.U.N., 65-year-old controller of the Space Fleet, who accompanied the Space Expedition to find a landing place on Mars in 1980 for his lifetime of service with the Fleet. He has made over a hundred space flights.

MECHANICAL HOPE

EAC

EVERY WEDNESDAY

COMPAN

EAGLE

EVERY WEDNESDAY



4½d

DARING to DREAM

CELEBRATING 70 YEARS SINCE THE CREATION OF
DAN DARE: PILOT OF THE FUTURE

WORDS: MARK SMITH



WATCHING HELPLESSLY AS Nazi V2 rockets flew into the sky as an act of Hitler's ultimate revenge, destined to rain death and destruction on helpless civilians, Frank Hampson looked at their vanishing vapour trails and dreamed of a better world. What if, one day, such rockets could be used to carry people into space? What if, one day, the people of Earth were united in a common goal of exploration and adventure? It was these wartime experiences that would lead to the birth of *Dan Dare*.

2020 marked 70 years since Britain's very own Pilot Of The Future began to wow generations of youngsters with tales of space flight and adventure. First appearing in the

iconic *Eagle* comic in 1950, Colonel Dan Dare was a distinctly British hero almost alone in a sea of early and mid-20th century space adventures dominated by characters with American accents and sensibilities such as Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers. Embodying the British spirit of fair play and the stiff upper lip, he even wore a uniform like those adorning the country's military of the era. But it was not war or conflict that creator and illustrator Frank Hampson had in mind when he first put ink to paper – it was peace.

A veteran of both the Dunkirk evacuation and the D-Day landings, Hampson had seen a world torn apart by conflict, and witnessed what he later realised would be the dawn of the space race: as he travelled through France and

PILOT OF THE
in
THE SHIP T

GET HER NOSE
UP, DAN! TRY
EVERYTHING!

CHANICALLY, DAN'S MIND REACTS
AND THE WINGS BITE INTO VENUS' ATMOSPHERE
BRING ANASTASIA'S NOSE UP!

ASHED, MY
SHE'S UNDER
SORT OF CONTROL
AIN. LOOK!

Belgium, he saw the Nazis firing V2 rockets. Once back in civilian life, he began to dream of a world united under one flag, where science, exploration and adventure brought hope, not hatred, to humanity.

"Dan's world was one where there was a world government," explained Frank's son, Peter Hampson. "He was not part of a British space fleet, but an international one. The threats he faced in his adventures were seen as threats to the Earth as a whole, not individual nations. This reflected my father's political views – he was a socialist."

After the war, Hampson went to live in Southport, enrolling at the town's school of arts and crafts, where his skills as an illustrator began to flourish. It was when he met Reverend Marcus Morris, though, that the turning point in his career came. No fan of the influx of American crime and horror comics, Morris thought they were a bad influence on British youth. He wanted to see something more wholesome that would inspire a generation of young readers with tales of innocent adventure. Having initially hired Hampson to work on the parish magazine, together they would launch *Eagle*, with Dan Dare featuring on the front cover.

It was massively successful, shifting over 900,000 copies on its first print run. With his message of post-war hope, Dan Dare had found a very willing audience.

"I was three when *Dan Dare* and the *Eagle* exploded on the world," said Hampson Jr. "My earliest impressions are of my father working at his desk, of having other artists in and around the house, having models of spaceships and ray guns to play with. As I grew up, I was aware that he was nearly always to be found in his studio – all the artists worked in our house – and working pretty much all the time, even right up to the last moment before we, very occasionally, went away on holiday."



JOLLY GOOD SHOW

For kids growing up after the Second World War, the influence of US culture was everywhere, from Hollywood movies to rock and roll music. Dan Dare, though, was a quintessentially British invention. His biography had him born in Manchester, while his faithful companion, Digby, hailed from Wigan. The UK HQ of the Interplanet Space Fleet was split between London and an artificial island in Formby, near Hampson's real-life home of Southport.

"The strip very much reflected 'British' values," Hampson Jr said, "but with an internationalist outlook. His audience was young Brits!"

“I still get a thrill when I look at some of the most amazing front pages”

When taking to the stars in his own personal ship, the Anastasia, Dare was usually joined on his adventures by his faithful batman – military terminology for an officer's personal assistant – Albert Fitzwilliam Digby, while his missions were usually dished out by Sir Hubert Guest, the deputy commander of Space Fleet. Part of Guest's backstory was that he was the second man to walk on the moon – nobody tell Buzz Aldrin – before later taking command of the second ship to land on Mars and Venus.

The comic strip was also notable for being ahead of its time in the way it depicted women. In the 1950s and 1960s, many British women would have found themselves being ushered towards careers as secretaries, typists or telephone operators. However, Professor Jocelyn Peabody – one of Dare's main companions – was a scientist depicted as very much the hero's equal. Far from being a damsel in distress or "eye candy", as Hampson Jr



described some of the comic heroines of that era, she was smart, adventurous and tough. "I don't know if that was a specific aim, but I think he thought it important that a female character should be seen to be playing a leading role in the adventure, and to be equal or superior to the main male," he said.

The *Dan Dare* strips were noted for the complexity of their plots. Dan's first adventure, 'The Venus Story', played out over a remarkable 77 weekly editions of the *Eagle*. He would take on multi-dimensional villains with rich backstories – such as his arch enemy The Mekon, ruler of the Treens of Northern Venus, who had been genetically engineered to have a brain so massive he needed a hover chair to carry him around due to the weight of his head.

There was also Orak, a huge supercomputer that ruled over the Phants, featured in Hampson's favourite strip, the 'Rogue Planet' trilogy. One of the character's most famous adventures, it saw Dare and Digby joined by Lex and alien guide Leo as they travelled to the planet Cryptos on the verge of an invasion by the mysterious Phants.

'The Red Moon Mystery' featured Dare's uncle Ivor discovering what he believed to be the origin of what wiped out the Martian civilisation, with Dare under orders to investigate it – a mysterious rogue asteroid called the Red Moon. The day is saved thanks to Professor Peabody, who hatches a plan to draw away the moon and its inhabitants – a type of space locust – until it's destroyed by a bomb near Mercury.

"It is fair to say that he [Frank] had a lot of respect for his readers," said Peter Hampson. "He wanted them to enjoy the adventure and then also be able to pore over the detail in the drawings of the spaceships, weapons and environments, and get a second level of enjoyment from that."

BEEN THERE, DAN THAT

It's difficult to overstate just what a huge part of British cultural life *Eagle* was during its prime. The comic was revolutionary in terms of both the artwork and scale and scope of the stories it contained.

"Without doubt, *Dan Dare* made *Eagle*," argued David Britton, Chairman of the *Eagle* Society. "The stories were almost cinematographic, and Frank Hampson's artwork made it all so real. Dan Dare was no superhero. We could all be Dan Dare, if we tried hard enough."

Largely because of Reverend Morris's religious views, the characters featured were designed to be positive role models, with progressive views – for the time – such as not depicting foreigners as enemies or villains, while at least one child in any group of children had to be depicted as an ethnic minority.



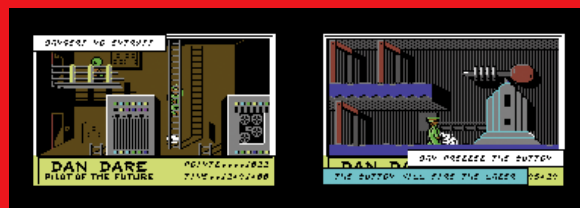
Retro Revival

Andrew Fisher tells us how the pilot of the future found his way into the world of videogames

In the mid-1980s, Richard Branson's Virgin Software eyed the *Dan Dare* property as ideal for a videogame adaptation. "I remember getting quite excited when the boss walked into the office and said we'd got the rights to a *Dan Dare* game. I went to Forbidden Planet the next day to get some of the collected books for inspiration," said Andy Wilson, the game's programmer.

"The game mission [for the ZX Spectrum and Amstrad versions] was actually influenced by the film *Alien*," remembered Martin Wheeler, another member of the development team. "We took the idea of self-destructing a spaceship by inserting keys into a device and we spread the keys around a bit." The C64 version had more arcade adventure overtones, with Dan using objects, fighting the Treens with his fists, destroying the Mekon with grenades and escaping before the asteroid blew up.

"I tried to stay as faithful to the comic as possible," continued Wilson. "I didn't really want to do the obvious thing of Dan running around with a ray gun shooting Treens. That just wasn't the Dan Dare I remembered as a kid. The character was always much more thoughtful."



"'The Red Moon Mystery' really did it for me," said Britton. "The drawing was so good and the concepts so innovative that they've stuck with me through life. I still get a thrill when I look at some of the most amazing front pages."

Dan Dare continues to live on, via several detours from his original appearance. Hampson himself left the strip in 1959 after *Eagle*'s new owners took issue with the complexity of the stories; he died in 1985. *Dan Dare* continued running until 1967, with different authors and illustrators, and in 1977 a reimagined version helped to launch *2000 AD*. In 1982, *Eagle* was revived as *The New Eagle*, with *Dan Dare* once

again its flagship strip, featuring a new Dare who was a distant descendant of the original.

In 2002 CGI TV series *Dan Dare: Pilot Of The Future* ran for 26 episodes. In 2010 there was talk of *Avatar* star Sam Worthington being cast in a *Dan Dare* movie, but it didn't happen. Titan Books continue to reprint classic strips, after a brief run of new material. For now, fans can enjoy new adventures in quarterly magazine *Spaceship Away*, and a crowdfunding campaign for an audio version of the strip was launched in 2020 but failed to reach its goals. But with that all said, surely it can't be long before the Pilot Of The Future returns...



2000 AD CELEBRATED ITS 45TH BIRTHDAY IN 2022. HOWEVER, IN ITS EARLY YEARS, THINGS WEREN'T PLAIN SAILING FOR THE SCI-FI COMIC

WORDS: STEPHEN JEWELL

FIRST PUBLISHED IN February 1977, *2000 AD* has truly established itself as the Galaxy's Greatest Comic over the past four and a half decades, thrilling Earthlets with the weekly adventures of classic characters such as Nemesis the Warlock, Slaine, Rogue Trooper and, of course, Judge Dredd. But having been rocked by the copyright scandals that plagued Dredd epic 'The Cursed Earth' and the fallout stemming from future-sport strip *Inferno*'s notorious ultra-violence, the Prog could so easily have

been cut off in its prime. For according to former IPC editorial director John Sanders, it was very nearly *2000 AD* that was merged into the short-lived *Starlord*.

"*Starlord* was sacrificed to keep *2000 AD* afloat," remembered Sanders. "The truth is, strong and far-sighted management saved *2000 AD* and without that management, the publication would have been dead and buried in 1978, a year after its launch."

"I remember some conversations with John Sanders about the merger, and it may be true that he nearly folded *2000 AD*," continued *2000 AD*'s second editor Kelvin Gosnell, who was

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Ten pence bought you a whole lot of Thrill-Power.



also in charge of *Starlord*. “Obviously I argued for *2000 AD* to remain as the lead title, and happily, that is what happened. *Starlord* had started off quite well but tailed off quite a bit, so it was losing more than it could support. Its more expensive production was certainly a factor, but it was IPC’s open-and-close policy that killed it more than anything.”

With the two sci-fi titles joining forces in October 1978’s Prog 86, *2000 AD* was given a new lease of life, partly through the addition of *Starlord*’s leading stories *Strontium Dog* and *Ro-Busters* (which later morphed into *ABC Warriors*). “They were both such great series,” said Gosnell. “It might be said that the migration of those two stories was the best – and maybe only – good thing to come out of *Starlord*. I didn’t want to do *Starlord* to begin with, as I wanted the budget for the launch to be used to further make *2000 AD* into its own unique and brilliant publication.”

Steve MacManus, who began his nine-year tenure as *2000 AD* editor with Prog 86, also believes that the Prog benefited from the arrival of Johnny Alpha and Hammerstein and Ro-Jaws. “Sales didn’t improve so much as hold steady, boding well for the future,” said MacManus, who’d previously worked as an assistant editor on *Starlord* and *Battle Picture Weekly*. “Suddenly, I was responsible for a staff of three, a stable of 30 freelancers, and I had the task of entertaining 100,000 kids every seven days!”

I, DREDD

Barely getting the chance to catch his breath after trekking across the irradiated American interior in the mostly Pat Mills-scripted ‘The Cursed Earth’, Judge Dredd was hurled headlong into another six-month multi-parter in Prog 86. Written by Old Stoney Face’s co-creator John

Wagner, ‘The Day The Law Died’ turned Dredd into an outlaw as the despotic Judge Cal rises to power in Mega-City One. “I could see from ‘The Cursed Earth’ that epic storylines gave Dredd more substance,” remembered Wagner, whose previous longest Dredd outing was Prog 9-17’s ‘Robot Wars’, which he adds “seemed to work well, as it was with that story that Dredd’s popularity in the comic had truly taken off.”

Wagner based Cal, whom he noted is “fondly remembered as a pantomime villain”, on the Roman Emperor Caligula, whose insane exploits were chronicled in Robert Graves’s 1934 novel *I, Claudius*, subsequently adapted for television by the BBC in 1976. “It’s one of my favourite books,” said Wagner. “I’d recently been reading or watching *I, Claudius*, and wanted to explore what

“Suddenly, I had the task of entertaining 100,000 kids every seven days”

would happen if such a madman controlled Mega-City One.”

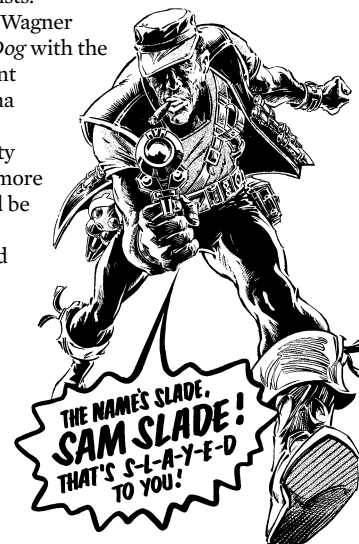
Concluding in April 1979’s Prog 108, the 23-part story saw the debut of reptilian alien mercenaries the Kleggs, Cal’s goldfish deputy Judge Fish, and the so-called ‘King of the Big Smelly’ Fergee: examples of the humour that’s always been an essential ingredient in Wagner’s work. “I’d get bored if there weren’t a few laughs,” he admitted, praising the unusually serene Sensitive Klegg, whom Rob Williams and D’Israeli first introduced in 2012’s Prog 1806.

While art chores on ‘The Cursed Earth’ were shared by Mike McMahon and Brian Bolland,

‘The Day The Law Died’ was illustrated by several different artists, who apart from McMahon and Bolland also included Brett Ewins, Brendan McCarthy, Dave Gibbons, Garry Leach and Ron Smith. MacManus attributed the ever-changing artistic line-up to “the need to meet the weekly publishing schedule”, and Wagner claimed that it had an adverse effect. “That’s the trouble with weekly episodes and a long story,” he said. “It’s hard for any artist to keep up, and the only artist I knew who could do that was Carlos Ezquerra.”

However, Bolland suggested that the diversity of artistic approaches was a testament to the versatility of Dredd’s world. “I appreciated that the people at *2000 AD* tolerated the difference in style between Mick McMahon and me, and also Ron Smith, Carlos Ezquerra and Ian Gibson, and I never felt criticised or instructed to draw differently,” he reasoned. “I’ve always been a slow artist, but in the earliest days I got around that by working day and night, so I could occasionally draw a page in a day. By the time I was drawing ‘Judge Death’, I was given as much time as I needed to work while the editor of the time juggled stories and artists.”

Along with *Judge Dredd*, Wagner also co-created *Strontium Dog* with the late Carlos Ezquerra. Mutant bounty hunter Johnny Alpha made for a very different protagonist to the Mega-City lawman. “Johnny had a lot more soul than Dredd, who could be a bit of an automaton,” highlighted Wagner. “Dredd was sure of himself and his aims, especially in the first thousand episodes or so, while Johnny was a man





SPACE SPINNER

Editor Matt Smith on 2000 AD's 45th anniversary issue

After the 40th anniversary's ruby celebration, are you commemorating 2000 AD's 45th with any special theme?

I'm going for a music-related theme, tying in to 45rpm. Hence Tharg spinning discs on Brian Bolland's cover of the anniversary issue, which links to David Barnett and Robin Smith's Tharg story inside the prog itself. Then the summer special later in the year will feature stories inspired by creators' favourite singles.

The anniversary prog also sees the beginning of 'The Citadel', a new Judge

Dredd 10-parter by John Wagner and Dan Cornwell. What can we expect from that?

It grew out of another look at a 'Death of Dredd' scenario, with a possibly unreliable narrator conveying what he saw some 40 years ago. John chose to set it in the Apocalypse War, and the majority of the story is flashbacks. It starts in an Iso-Block with a prisoner scheduled for execution relating a story to a priest who's come to comfort him – a story the inmate thinks the Justice Department will want to repress...

Grab Prog 2270 from shop.2000ad.com

searching for something he could never find – an inner peace, if you like."

While he inevitably gave way to a multitude of other artists on *Judge Dredd*, Ezquerro drew the vast majority of *Strontium Dog* strips. "*Strontium Dog* was always me and Carlos, and Alan Grant added a lot as well when we teamed up," adds Wagner, referring to his long-time writing partner. "Carlos was very possessive of the character, and strenuously objected when Alan and I decided to kill him off [in 1988's 'The Final Solution']."

With previous storyline 'The Doomsday Machine' having wrapped up in Prog 85, Dan Dare returned in the anniversary Prog 100, pairing veteran scripter Tom Tully with future

Watchmen artist Dave Gibbons. 'Servant Of Evil' pitted the erstwhile Pilot of the Future, now equipped with a superhero-esque costume and a cybernetic hand, against his old *Eagle* adversary, the big-headed alien Mekon, although the story ended inconclusively in August 1979's Prog 126.

"I had quite a few goes at doing *Dan Dare*, as I also did an extended run with Gerry Finley-Day," recalled Gibbons, who first drew the strip in Prog 28. "But although I got a lot of spaceships, aliens and action to draw, it never quite lived up to my vision of the character, as I saw it as my chance to do something that could stand alongside what Frank Hampson and Frank Bellamy had done in the 1950s on *Eagle*. When it came to 'Servant Of Evil', I had a little bit more input as I managed to



get the Mekon in there. It became a bit of a hybrid of what Frank Hampson had done and what I'd done earlier with Gerry. How it ended so abruptly was a bit unsatisfying as well, as I tried my hardest with *Dan Dare*."

SLADE RUNNER

After making its debut in Prog 76, *Robo-Hunter* also made a comeback in Prog 100, with Sam Slade's trademark absurdity just starting to come to the fore in his 22-chapter opening storyline. "Humour was just as important in 'Verdus', it just took a while to click in," said Wagner. "I always liked Ian Gibson's artwork, as I love his funny robots, and in fact, I've recently commissioned a sculpture of Hoagy and Stogie, two of his great character renderings."

It was all change once again as adventure weekly *Tornado* was incorporated into the Galaxy's Greatest Comic with August 1979's Prog 127. "The *Tornado* merger was much less successful than the *Starlord* merger," said Scott Montgomery, who has marked the Prog's 45th anniversary by compiling the new *2000 AD Encyclopedia*. "2000 AD inherited *Captain Klep*, *The Mind Of Wolfie Smith* and *Blackhawk*, which were clearly nowhere in the league of the likes of the fantastic material that would soon appear over the next few years."

2000 AD's best was, as Steve MacManus insisted, yet to come. "The specific direction, the aim of the editorial and art team was to reach maximum Thrill-Power," he said. "And I believe this was achieved with Prog 232 in October 1981, which featured *Judge Dredd*, *Strontium Dog*, *Nemesis The Warlock*, *Rogue Trooper* and the debut of *Ace Trucking Co*."

2000 AD Encyclopedia and Brian Bolland: *The Apex Edition* are available now.



ESSENTIAL RETRO SCI-FI VIDEOGAMES

GAMING HAS ALLOWED SCI-FI WORLDS TO BECOME MORE REAL, MORE EXPLORATORY AND MORE PERSONAL. HERE ARE SOME OF THE BEST YOU SHOULD PLAY...

WORDS: ADAM BARNES



GAMING AS A PASTIME IS CLOSELY LINKED TO ADVANCES in technology, and for that reason, it is not a surprise that game developers have created countless sci-fi worlds. But beyond the creative imaginations of its creators, the fact of the matter is that gaming as a hobby can offer much more for science fiction fans than any movie or book might. These are experiences where you, the player, can directly be involved – whether that is exploring the details of fascinating futuristic landscapes or directly influencing the world in which you find yourself. Videogames invite you to become a participant in the story, rather than a detached observer.

Modern gaming is unparalleled in its capabilities of showcasing SF universes, absolutely brimming with interactivity. But there's something to be said for the classics, and there are several must-play releases that we will showcase over the next few pages. Many of these games came at a time when the games industry as a whole was still learning what it was capable of, and through that frontier of innovation, game creators were able to devise some of the most captivating science fiction worlds, stories and experiences that we've ever seen.





You're free
to do as you
please in *EVE*
Online.

EVE ONLINE

Space has never been this big

2003

It's impossible to deny that *EVE Online* is intimidating to get started with. Put the effort in to dedicate the time, however, and you'll find yourself living a whole new (virtual) life. You see, *EVE* is an MMORPG, which is a fancy shorthand to say that you play the game alongside others.

This could have its setbacks since, yes, you might find yourself suddenly ambushed in your spacecraft and be forced to lose out on all your hard-earned loot, but at the same time, you'll become engrossed in a functioning sci-fi world replete with political drama, player-driven faction wars and freedom to be yourself among the stars. There have been countless surprising



That ship
probably cost a
decade's worth
of space-pay.

events that have turned the tides of the game and even impacted its realistic in-game economy.

It's a game that enables you to plot your own way through its complicated political landscape and permits you to simply enjoy being out in space. You could be a simple trader, sourcing cheap goods; a miner, looking for uncommon space rock; a bounty hunter, seeking the galaxy's most wanted; a space pirate, an explorer, a high-security pilot, a hacker, a spy... you get the picture; we're running out of space.



SYNDICATE

All for one

1993

In a far-flung future, there is only money; it's the start of most cyberpunk stories and *Syndicate* is no different. However, what is interesting here is its attitude towards it: you are not the lowly gutter rat hacking your way through the greedy corporations. In fact, you *are* the greedy corporations doing everything you can to compete among the other syndicates of the world.

What this means when it comes to gameplay is that you equip and command a team of cyborgs while they undergo disruptive measures to give you an advantage on the market. This means assassinating other syndicate leaders, stealing their tech and resources, or rescuing your allies.

The game here was particularly novel at the time, but sci-fi fans will likely appreciate its humorous take on an otherwise tried-and-tested cyberpunk trope. Working to gain territorial control by manipulating the CHIPs cybernetically installed in the back of everyone's necks certainly sounds like something Amazon or Facebook might do in the not-so-distant future, but here at least we can enjoy the fact that this is supposed to be a dystopia and you can revel in your syndicate's villainy.

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

The path to the dark side

2003

There are plenty of great *Star Wars* games – and some not-so-hot, truth be told. Some are shooters, strategy games, flight simulators and platformers. There's even a pod racing game! But *Knights Of The Old Republic* is a magnificent epic that should be considered one of the entire *Star Wars* saga's high points.

This is a role-playing game, meaning that not only are you levelling up your lightsaber-wielding protagonist to unlock new Force powers and increase your strength, but you'll also put together a motley team of companions ranging from an assassin droid, a Mandalorian and even a Wookiee. As with any role-playing game, the choices you make are just as important as the sweeping story and action-packed battles. This is something *KOTOR* excels at, making it one of the few *Star Wars* games that can be played differently every time, thanks to how you build your character in terms of personality and combat prowess.

But the story is still one of its stand-out aspects, which is undoubtedly something that any *Star Wars* fan should experience. It is pretty well-known for having quite a massive and perspective-bending twist, too, but you really should play it to discover what that is.





METROID The grandma of sci-fi games

1986

Metroid is such an important release that it has since helped to spawn an entire genre that emulates its style. That's because *Metroid* was an innovative forerunner, released well over three decades ago, granting players a sense of freedom while exploring a hostile planet. Most games released in the late 1980s didn't have the technical clout to do much more than scroll left to right; in fact, most wouldn't even let you go back the way you came. *Metroid* did it differently, and while there was a strict route through the game's world, it was up to the player to get to know the different spaces and how to get around.

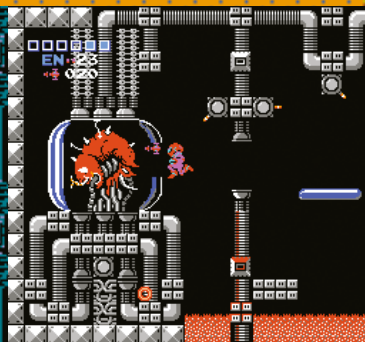
It might be hard to believe by looking at these screenshots today, but *Metroid* was well-loved for its atmospheric and claustrophobic experience. As the player character Samus, you explore the planet Zebes to seek out and defeat hostile alien lifeforms known as Metroids. It's an isolated experience and, as such, it can feel quite unnerving. It's what made the game so engrossing, however, and helped players glean a detailed sense of place in a sci-fi world – even with those basic-looking 8-bit graphics.

This is particularly important because another noteworthy aspect of the series (and any 'Metroidvania' game that has mimicked it) is the significance of finding new abilities, which not only increase Samus's fighting capabilities but also assist her to find new places to explore. It helps to etch the world into the player's mind as they discover new places each time they backtrack. This, in particular, has become a mainstay for the *Metroid* series, which has since gone on to become a keystone franchise for Nintendo. It may not look so impressive to our modern eyes, but gaming owes a huge amount to Samus and her Metroid-eradicating mission.

Samus broke new ground by being a female badass hero.



The developers were heavily inspired by *Alien*.



The final Mother Brain boss is a tough one. Pack some rockets!



DEUS EX Are you a man or a machine?

2000

Once upon a time, the topic of cybernetics, bionic limbs and the potential future where the human race embraces digital synthesis were concepts that felt far away in the world of sci-fi. *Deus Ex* wasn't the first to touch on the topic, but it's a critical plot point throughout the game. It's a cyberpunk dystopia set in 2052 in which a global pandemic known as the Grey Death, a nanomachine-based virus, is wiping out millions of people. All of this is part of a greater conspiracy, of course, and JC Denton (that's you), ends up becoming the primary person in charge of uncovering the truth.

But what's most exciting for sci-fi fans is how this immersive shooter mixes things up. You're given a lot more freedom over how you choose to play the game, so while you can run into a

building and use your heavy firepower to claim victory, you may instead prefer to take things slow. That might mean finding ways to sneak around your enemies, hack the security tech and turn it against the bad guys, or use persuasion and guile to have the access codes and the info you need handed over to you. And as a nanomachine-augmented special agent, you can bet there are plenty of upgrades available for you to tweak your play experience to how you like it.

The more recent *Deus Ex* games might look a little more appealing (and are worth checking out in their own right), especially if you wouldn't define yourself as a gamer, but there's something about the dark, dystopian, techy future that the original creates that makes it an all-time essential game for fans of cyberpunk fiction.



The Future Classics of Today

The newer games that will be talked about for decades to come

Mass Effect 2

This is gaming's answer to *Star Trek* and *The Expanse*. It's got a plethora of quirky aliens, intergalactic conflicts and away missions. Just for the lore alone, this is a series worth playing for any sci-fi fan, though its gameplay is simple enough that most will get on with it. The entire first trilogy is recommended, but if you only choose one then go with *Mass Effect 2*.



NieR Automata

NieR Automata has a high barrier of entry than many of the other games here. However, if you're willing to put in the time to discover what the game has to say, you will find yourself rewarded. It's an existential approach to sci-fi that uses sentient androids to explore life. Without giving too much away, it's biggest emotional beats can only be achieved in a videogame format.



Alien: Isolation

If you like your sci-fi with a side of horror, then you don't want to overlook *Alien: Isolation*. The game commands excellent use of its source material, making for an unforgettable imagining of what it might be like to share a space station with a xenomorph hunting you. It's honest-to-god terrifying and the best *Alien* story since *Aliens*.



STARCRAFT

Terran nova

1998

The approach that developer Blizzard takes with its games is to be as cinematic as it can be, while still maintaining high-quality, compelling gameplay. At the time, there were a lot of technical limits on *StarCraft*, but it still managed to produce a thoroughly interesting single-player campaign with a rich and varied sci-fi storyline.

But when it comes to the gameplay, few strategy games at the time - even now, perhaps - had *StarCraft* beat. It was so finely tuned and keenly designed that it was the turning point for esports and helped to pave the way for competitive gaming as a concept.



Those Zerg are destroying that building by vomiting on it.



Before this, *Final Fantasy* went all-in on classic fantasy.

FINAL FANTASY VII

Ecowarriors gone wrong

1997

It might be rough around the edges now considering it was released at the beginning of 3D games, but in terms of RPG gaming, there aren't many games that can hold a candle to *FFVII*. Its story focuses on a world not unlike our own. One where corporations are sucking the planet dry of resources and don't give a hoot about what happens to it in the meantime. This is the message throughout the game, and while things do start to get... let's say 'weird' by the end, it's a captivating take on an atompunk yarn that engages as much with its RPG systems as its unique world and characters.

SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI

The future is yours

1999

The difference with *Alpha Centauri* isn't just in the pacing of its gameplay, but instead in the fact that it gives SF lovers a chance to do something that they perhaps always dreamed of: start a new civilization on a new planet. It reuses a lot of what made the *Civilization* games from the same developer so compelling but has us asking questions about the impact space exploration and colonisation could have. Should we strive for

ecological harmony with the new planetary home, force it to bend to our will, or drain it of resources for personal gain? Add in political strife when your ideals clash with another faction's, and you've got a fascinating simulation of how it might be if we settle on Mars.





X-COM: UFO DEFENSE Or, 'how to lose an alien invasion'

1994

According to *X-COM*, encountering aliens is not a happy experience. It's not enough that they come down with their UFOs and ruin our crops with their circles, but it seems they can be vicious, too! *X-COM* is gruelling, no doubt about it. You're the commander of a secret organisation called Extraterrestrial Combat, whose duty is to build up a team of soldiers capable of saving Earth from an alien invasion.

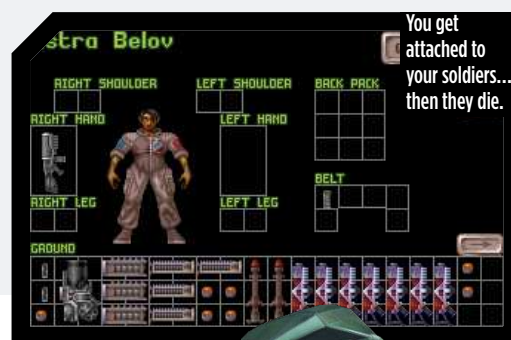
This comes in two core parts: on one hand, you must send soldiers out into the field in turn-based combat, outwitting the high-tech aliens and overcoming them through strategy and force. Your soldiers will then level up, increasing in power and making them stronger for later battles. Then there's the strategic portion of the game, where you must manage the functions of your HQ, balancing researching new technologies for stronger weaponry with maintaining your base and sending out scouting

planes, all while struggling to keep the funding coming in from the 16 founding countries of X-COM. Surprisingly, it's harder work enduring the global politics of an alien invasion than it is to go toe-to-webbed-toe with an ET.

Don't mistake that to mean that the battle view is easy, however. *X-COM* is notoriously difficult, to the point that a single wrong move could mean the failure of a mission and perhaps, with it, the defence of the planet. This is made all the worse by the fact that your soldiers do not heal after a battle. When the stakes are this high and the difficulty is that tough, losing a highly levelled veteran warrior because their 95% chance-to-hit shot missed is the kind of experience that will leave you bundled up in the foetal position praying for a real alien invasion to come. And weirdly, somehow this is a fantastic experience.



We can't see things ending well for Helga Berger.



HALO Truly the Master (Chief)

2001

There aren't many sci-fi universes in videogames as detailed, unique and epic as *Halo*'s. It's a huge franchise that has gone on to massive things - even its own TV show - but there's no denying that one of the primary reasons for this is just how well-thought-out and considered the lore of *Halo* is. Lovers of sci-fi will find themselves drawn in by tales of the mysterious Forerunners, the secrets of Halo ringworld that the player finds themselves on, and the culture of the Covenant forces that you'll spend the game in intense gun battles with.

And boy, are those battles thrilling. While there is the standard human-inspired fare here, there are plenty of inventive sci-fi weapons to employ, too, from plasma rifles and antigrav speeders to the iconic Needler pistol with its explosive combo shots. Thanks to the smart AI of the game, *Halo*'s world felt more like a tactical battlefield with the player and their UNSC allies

in a steady to-and-fro against the alien forces. These wide, open spaces were also unusual in shooters at the time, which gave *Halo* a very distinctive approach to its combat that few games could match.

Then there's the memorable Master Chief character, the main star of the series and - despite his heavily armoured and non-descript look - has gone on to become one of the most recognisable mascots of gaming in its history. There isn't enough space in this book to talk about the innovations that *Halo* introduced and why they were important, so instead we'll say this: there hasn't been a sci-fi game series yet that has matched the detail of *Halo*'s universe and certainly none that have been as original. The entire series is well worth a look if you like to get stuck into the nitty gritty of sci-fi lore, but in any case, *Halo* is an utter classic in every sense of the word.



The alien designs and their AI are brilliant.



The Warthog has become an iconic vehicle in videogaming.



A laser sword that'll make Luke Skywalker jealous.





HALF-LIFE

They're waiting for you, Gordon

1998

Gamers around the globe hail *Half-Life* and its sequel as two of the best games of all time. But for sci-fi fans, the first *Half-Life* was one of the first instances of a truly rich and fully realised world. One that captivated from start to finish by plopping players into the boots of scientist Gordon Freeman as he unwittingly initiates a "resonance cascade" that opens a portal to a distant planet.

For the first time, *Half-Life* told its story directly to the player, through the first-person perspective of Gordon, rather than overusing cinematic sequences to explain what was going on. This is what made the game so engrossing. As a surprisingly athletic and gun-savvy scientist, it was you who uncovered the truth behind the top-secret Black Mesa laboratory, who single-handedly fought back against the military forces looking to cover up the situation and travelled to the alien world of Xen for final payback and to stop the invasion.

The solid gameplay is the reason to keep playing since you never tire of taking on the next challenge waiting around the corner, but its intricate sci-fi storyline - and here that includes the mystery of the eerie observer, the G-Man, you'll spot throughout - continues to draw you through to learn more. All the best stories in games are the ones that keep you captivated without actually directly telling you anything, and *Half-Life* is a master of that.

Equally, its bestiary of creatures is some of the most inventive in the genre. Sure, the body-controlling Headcrab that zombifies its victims might not be too much of a stretch to imagine however iconic it may be, but the ceiling sucking Barnacle, the creepy EMP field firing Houndeye or the electric Vortigaunt all add to the lore. They truly feel alien in their design, and that helps generate a feeling of unease.

Best of all is that it's not too hard to play *Half-Life* these days, there's even a remake called *Black Mesa* that comes with modern PC compatibility and greatly improved visuals without touching the core experience. And while it's important to point out that *Half-Life 2* is indeed the better game in every way - including the story - if you want to explore a truly classic retro sci-fi game then there's no better way than this crowbar-toting showstopper.

“You never tire of taking on the next challenge”



Black ops teams drop in to keep everything on the down low.



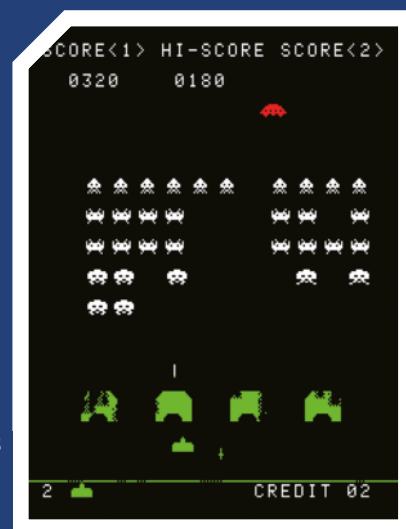
It's all gone a bit *Resident Evil* in the Black Mesa facility.



THE IMPACT OF

SPACE INVADERS

THEY DIDN'T COME FROM OUTER SPACE BUT A COLLECTION OF ALIENS MADE JUST AS BIG AN IMPACT HERE ON EARTH WHEN THEY BOUNDED INTO ARCADES IN 1978. DAVID CROOKES ROUNDS UP CREATOR TOMOHIRO NISHIKADO AND A HOST OF DEVELOPERS AND CULTURAL ARTISTS TO DISCUSS THE WIDE-RANGING EFFECTS OF **SPACE INVADERS**



The more aliens you blasted, the faster they would move.

TIMELINE

Charting over 40 years of repelling invaders

🕹️ *Space Invaders* released in the arcades🎵 Yellow Magic Orchestra samples *Space Invaders* sounds in the single *Computer Game*🎮 Gamers could pop their name on the high score table in *Space Invaders Deluxe*🍹 A cocktail table follow-up, *Space Invaders II*, appears

-1978-

-1979-

THROUGHOUT THE BEST PART OF THE 1970s, game developer Tomohiro Nishikado looked towards America with aspiration in his eyes. In turn, the US peered back at Japan with a dollop of suspicion.

But that was symptomatic of the state of these nations during that period – a decade in which post-war America, in line with much of the western world, suffered economic stagnation while the Far East enjoyed rapid growth.

Nishikado was a talented young developer, an engineering graduate who had been employed by the Japanese vending machine manufacturer Taito since 1969. He'd had reasonable success with a variety of games, starting with the Pong clone *Elephong* in 1972, followed by *Davis Cup* and *Soccer* in 1973, again inspired by the classic game from Atari.

The titles he worked on would show great promise and innovation. *Speed Race* in 1974 had scrolling graphics, a racing wheel controller and a choice of beginner or advanced play; *Western Gun* (*Gun Fight* in the US) was the first to bring human-vs-human action to videogames the following year.

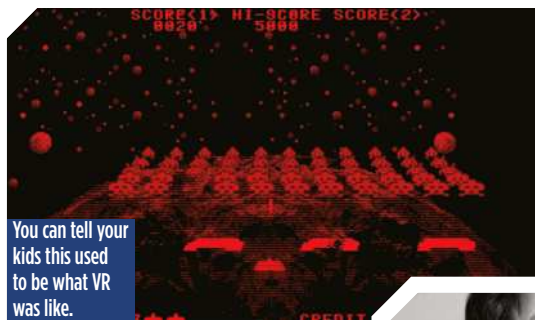
Yet at that time, America was dominating the videogame industry. Atari in particular had seized the market and it was leading in arcades – and homes, too, thanks to the launch of its popular 2600 console. Nishikado became hooked on Atari's *Breakout* and the more he played, the more determined he became to better it.

"My goal at that time was to catch up with the United States," he remembered. But in that aim, he was not alone. For throughout the 1970s (and going into the 1980s), Japan had been snapping at the heels of key American businesses, most notably the automobile industry. American manufacturing had been in decline and power was swinging.

As such, there was rising discrimination and an increase in what has been dubbed 'Japanophobia' – a revival of anti-Japanese sentiment that predated the Second World War. "There was this interesting tension as the rise and strength of the Japanese economy really made an impression on the United States' national identity as the great country of innovators and inventors," explained the academic game designer professor Lindsay Grace.

With that in mind, Nishikado's next game, *Space Invaders*, would face multiple battles. Alien invasions aside, it had to fight against a fear of Japanese influence on American culture. And, there were worries the game was proving too distracting for children.

On the issue of Japanophobia, however, Lindsay contended *Space Invaders* "gave more fodder or proof for not being afraid". Indeed, it opened up gaming and its huge potential right across the world. "It's hard to know what would have happened to gaming without *Space Invaders*," highlighted Mark Cutmore, head of commercial enterprises at the Science Museum Group.



You can tell your kids this used to be what VR was like.

Tomohiro Nishikado is the creator of *Space Invaders*.



Space Invaders landed with impeccable timing. "Videogames were in the ascendant, a new form of entertainment with untold promise," explained Iain Simons, director of culture at the British Games Institute. As such, it was a time of great experimentation, of pushing the available tech and creating new genres.

To that end, Nishikado began work on *Space Invaders* in 1977 and he created a microcomputer from scratch to do so. It was the first Japanese game to use microprocessors and it became the most advanced arcade game available. Built around Intel's 8080 8-bit processor rather than using discrete logic chips, it made for better performance.

Perhaps more importantly, *Space Invaders* also anchored itself to the predominant themes of mainstream culture at the time. "This era was the dawn of the space age – both in reality with the Apollo moon landings, the launch of the space shuttle, communications and spy satellites, interplanetary probes, and with science fiction such as *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Dune* and *Aliens*," said game developer Eugene Jarvis, who went on to produce his own sci-fi shooter, *Defender*, in 1981.

It wasn't always going to be that way. Initially, Nishikado considered aeroplanes as the enemy, but he switched to humans for technical reasons. Taito wasn't happy and felt it would be too immoral to have gamers blasting away at people so Nishikado chose to set the game in space



🕒 *Super Invader* becomes an early clone

🕒 Funny Stuff releases the song *Disco Space Invaders*

🕒 The Pretenders release the hit song *Space Invader*

🕒 *Space Invaders* lands on the Atari 2600

🕒 10,000 players compete in the National Space Invaders Superbowl run by Atari

🕒 Bally Midway releases a pinball version



As tech advanced, flashier Invaders attacked Earth.



This GBA version made *Space Invaders* portable.

instead. It was, he said, “a convenient theme for videogames unlike sports that are bound by specific rules”. He chose well.

“*Star Wars* had just captured the imagination of the entire world, not just as a movie, but as a universe,” Simons explained. “We didn’t just buy a ticket to watch the film, we bought the action figures and the lunchbox to take our sandwiches to school in. *Space Invaders* arrived at the peak of that first wave of a new, popular science fiction explosion. It was a new, aspirational technology that shackled itself to the moment.”

Even so, *Space Invaders* still had to be attractive regardless of the cultural boost at the time, and that was always at the forefront of Nishikado’s mind. It meant that when *Space Invaders* was released in the arcades in Japan in 1978, its impact was immediate, with some pachinko parlours and bowling alleys soon rebranding themselves as *Space Invaders* arcades, filled to the brim with coin-op machines.

“I was surprised by media reports saying that pachinko parlours – a leading industry in Japanese entertainment at that time – were being invaded by the game,” Nishikado said. He was

also astonished to read that the game was causing a shortage of 100-yen coins.

“It is true that newspapers reported *Space Invaders* caused the shortage of 100-yen coins and, consequently, Nippon Ginko’s increased production of 100 yen coins, but I didn’t feel that much at the beginning of the boom,” Nishikado explained. “One day, I happened to see the tyre of a truck weighed down by a load of collected 100 yen coins in the car park at Taito’s headquarters. This surprised me and I realised that *Space Invaders* had become a phenomenon.”

Although many a gaming expert has since dispelled the yen shortage as fake news, *Space Invaders*’ popularity was very much true. But even though it was eating up cash, there were fears in Japan that the game was leading to delinquency and children playing truant.

“It was an unanticipated fad for the amusement industry and so rules or regulations were not able to catch up with that instant phenomenon,” Nishikado said. “But if I, as a games creator, was to look back in a positive way, I’d say it heralded a new era of entertainment in Japan.”

There is no denying that. When Nishikado visited the Amusement and Music Operators Association show in 1978 when the game was introduced, he was astounded. “I saw a lot of people waiting in the queue in front of the *Space Invaders* cabinet and, at that moment, I felt that our games might be overtaking the videogame giant.” The US had competition.

It was 1981 and a number of parents in the affluent village of Irvington in the state of New York were waging a war of sorts against their children. They were incensed at the plethora of arcade machines which had been invading their space for a few years and they’d managed to convince the authorities to do something about them.

The proposal was dramatic and involved banning anyone under the age of 17 from playing. It also sought to impose a \$100 licensing fee for machines and restrict the number that any single establishment could have to two. “I hear they’re addictive,” said mayor Reginald F Marra, as the village prepared to vote on the issue.

Marra was against the age limit, but he sympathised with the concerns. Just as in Japan, the games were eating up pocket money and while that was good news for the owners, they were being blamed for kids going without lunch or arriving late at school.

The arcade machine was brought to America by Midway and it soon appeared in cafes and pizza parlours. But although arcade machines had been making inroads into American culture for the best part of ten years, they had not attracted quite the same level of attention as the Japanese newcomer.

“I found a *Pong* machine in a laundromat in Kent, Ohio, in 1975 and I decided that I preferred spending my quarters on drying clothes,” scorned games developer Matt Householder, who went on to develop *Moon Patrol*, for the ColecoVision.

🎮 Acclaimed author Martin Amis writes *Invasion Of The Space Invaders*

🎮 *Space Invaders* grosses \$2 billion

🎮 *Pepsi Invaders* is commissioned by Coca-Cola

🎮 *Return Of The Invaders* is released

🎮 Taito releases the game on the NES in Japan

🎮 KP Snacks sells *Space Raiders* crisps

1982 1983 1985 1987

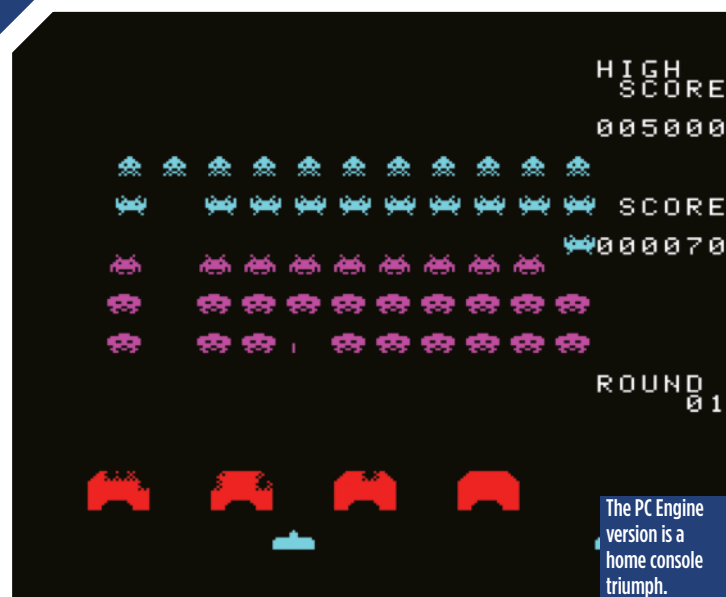
"Space Invaders was the first videogame (coin-op or otherwise) that I found was truly fun to play." He wasn't alone.

"Suddenly, videogames had some character," Simons said. "Sure, they were two-dimensional and rudimentarily animated but the aliens in *Space Invaders* had enough character to make themselves feel like characters. *Pong* was an astonishing achievement, but it didn't provide videogames with a figurehead. *Space Invaders*' marauding, oceanic aliens delivered such a powerful character design that they're still used to symbolise videogames to this day."

As it proved, 1978 was a turning point both for the videogame industry and the growing backlash against it. The same happened in the UK, the rest of Europe and other markets around the world. One of the main problems was that *Space Invaders* was so addictive, although some people found other, more bizarre reasons to outlaw this particular invasion.

ARCADE INVASION

In *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture Had Invaded the US*, author Roland Kelts writes of *Pac-Man* creator Toru Iwatani's "bafflement when discussing the banning of *Space Invaders* in several southern states in the Eighties – allegedly because aliens are not in the Bible, and because of the game's violence towards them". Unlucky for them, *Space Invaders*' success only led to more shooters. In the Eighties, Japanese arcades were dominated by them.



The PC Engine version is a home console triumph.

WORLD DOMINATION

How Space Invaders made its way into the zeitgeist

➤ **Music** – Musicians were inspired by *Space Invaders* after its launch and, even putting aside the sampled audio in the messy medley that was Yellow Magic Orchestra's hit, *Computer Game*, fans could enjoy *Disco Space Invaders* by Funny Stuff in 1979, *Space Invader* by The Pretenders in 1980 and *Space Invaders* by Player One.



➤ **Literature** – It may seem odd that Martin Amis' wrote the guide, *Invasion Of The Space Invaders*, in 1982 but he's not the only author to reference the game. Terry Pratchett's *Only You Can Save Mankind* saw invader-style aliens surrendering and seeking help. Characters in *Discworld* play *Barbarian Invaders*.



➤ **Television** – *Space Invaders* has had an impact on the small screen in a variety of ways. Not only was a BBC series by celebrity builder Tommy Walsh called *Space Invaders*, there have been numerous references to the game in *Futurama*, *Scrubs*, *Chuck*, *Danger Mouse* and *Black Mirror* among many others.



➤ **Art** – The urban artist Invader has decorated cities across the world with *Space Invaders* ceramic tile mosaics, some of which were stolen in Paris in 2017. The game has also featured in many exhibitions and gallery spaces, with one single alien invader sprite becoming a design icon.



© KYLABORG (1).

➤ **Film** – Whether it's *Spaced Invaders* or appearances in sci-fi films such as *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* and *Cherry 2000*, Hollywood hasn't been immune to the classic title. *Space Invaders* has a role in *Pixels* and there's talk of a movie directly based on the series.



➤ **Architecture** – Many home interior design companies are called 'Space Invaders'. But does the game's influence spread to blueprints? Yes, if NL Architects' proposed *Space Invaders* alternative tower block is anything to go by. It was earmarked for South Korea.





🕒 **Majestic Twelve:**
The Space Invaders
Part IV launches

🕒 Versions of the game
hit the Game Boy and
Mega Drive

🕒 A prize-winning
riff on the game
offers a £20 jackpot

🕒 *Super Space Invaders*
offers non-arcade action
for home computers

🕒 *Space Invaders*
appears in the
film *Terminator 2:*
Judgement Day

🕒 The remake
Space Invaders
DX for arcades
is released

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Key games that define the series

>> *Space Invaders* (1978, Arcade)

The original was black and white and was released in Japan by Taito. An upright cabinet was introduced in the west by Midway, reflecting the graphics on to a painted backdrop. Gamers soon became acquainted with the need to blast away five rows of 11 aliens.



>> *Space Invaders* (1980, Atari 2600)

Atari bagged the home licence from Taito and created the 2600's must-have title. It only had 36 aliens and three (rather than four) defence barriers, but there were a staggering 112 game variations along with an assortment of shots, difficulty levels and a two-player modes.



>> *Return of the Invaders* (1985, Arcade)

The colour sequel launched seven years after the original and it unleashed the invaders like never before. The blocks of old were supplemented by waves of aliens that proved increasingly difficult to see off. Deflectors had to be shot in the centre.



>> *Majestic Twelve: The Space Invaders Part IV* (1990, arcade)

Also known as *Super Space Invaders 91*, this version was ported to 8-bit and 16-bit machines. As well as introducing boss invaders, the CG30 cannons could take more than one hit, and it was possible to play with a friend.



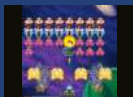
>> *Space Invaders DX* (1993, arcade)

A number of games make up this classic: there are colour, monochrome and cellophane versions of the original. The most fun of all is the parody game: this replaced the invaders sprites with characters from nine of Taito's games.



>> *Space Invaders 95: Attack of the Lunar Loonies* (1995, arcade)

This is a wacky, upbeat, cartoony rendition of *Space Invaders* which allowed you to play as various characters. It has many Earth-based settings and gives you five bosses to battle, making it familiar and unique at the same time.



>> *Space Invaders* (1999, PlayStation)

This was one of a glut of variants at the turn of the millennium but it puts a fresh spin on the design. Modelled in 3D, players have to hit four aliens of the same colour in a row to receive different power-ups. There are nods to 1978 in the intro, too.



>> *Space Invaders Extreme* (2008, Nintendo DS/PSP)

Produced to coincide with the 30th anniversary, *Space Invaders Extreme* stands as one of the finest remakes in the series' history. Four-hit combos would earn power-ups and it was possible to control when the UFO appeared.



>> *Space Invaders Infinity Gene* (2009, iOS/Android)

Infinity Gene brought things up to date with charming simplicity, making the most of the touchscreens of mobile devices. It also added the ability to unlock better weapons and rewarded the chain destruction of enemies.



>> *Space Invaders Frenzy* (2017, arcade)

You can't miss Raw Thrills' *Space Invaders Frenzy*. It plays on a nine-foot-tall screen, uses oversized lightgun cannons as controllers and allows you to identify and blast at individual aliens regardless of where they may be.



"As the popular game of the era, *Space Invaders* became the target of fear but the cause was that people didn't understand the emerging trend for gaming or recognise the positive aspects of it," said Householder. "The same fears had been levelled at TV in its early days and at new genres of music like punk and hip-hop."

As it happens, the proposed ban on children in Irvington was thrown out and the planned restrictions on cabinet numbers were loosened to three machines per establishment. Yet arcade games – *Space Invaders* in particular – continued to attract as much negative attention as it did positive. In 1981, George Foulkes, Labour MP for South Ayrshire in Scotland tried to push the Control Of Space Invaders And Other Electronic Games bill through the UK parliament.

"A Sheffield mother is quoted as saying that a Jekyll and Hyde change came over her 14-year-old son when he became hooked on *Space Invaders*," he told MPs. "In London, a 13-year-old vanished from his home for ten days, visiting arcades to play the machines. Also in London, a 17-year-old was so desperate for money to feed the machines that he turned to blackmail and theft, demanding £900 from a clergyman with whom he had previously had sexual relations."



This Wii iteration let gamers control the aliens.

🕒 Players can enjoy a Virtual Boy *Space Invaders* experience

🕒 *Space Invaders* looks very different on the PlayStation

🕒 *Space Invaders Anniversary* celebrates 25 years of the series

🕒 *Space Invaders Revolution* is launched on the Nintendo DS

🕒 The PSP is blessed with the extreme *Space Invaders Evolution*

🕒 The game is chosen to represent Japan by the country's Agency For Cultural Affairs

PLAIN AND SIMPLE

For those who were playing *Space Invaders*, however, there was nothing better on Earth. It proved inspiring and it created a social scene for young people to hook into. "The game was being enjoyed by all ages due to its simple gameplay," explains Nishikado. "Having said that, the game is not that easy to win. The enemy aliens shoot at the player, which makes the players feel frustrated and nervous. On the other hand, the game gives exhilaration when the player defeats all the enemy aliens and clears a level. A blend of these feelings urged the players to insert another coin for the next challenge. I suppose this is the reason for the success of *Space Invaders*."

Scores of players and wannabe developers agreed and there was no getting around the fact that *Space Invaders* was hugely innovative. "It was one of the first times I had seen 'advanced graphics', and the novelty of controlling something on a screen was still really new," says game designer Graeme Devine, who went on to create *The 7th Guest* and *The 11th Hour*. "*Space Invaders* was also a watchable game: you'd understand the rules after watching a friend play a few games and you'd want to have a go."



Graeme Devine created *The 7th Guest* and *The 11th Hour*.

Space Invaders evolved with the times and went 3D.



Some of videogaming's key figures over the years were influenced by the game, not only in Japan but in the US, UK, the rest of Europe and beyond. *Doom* creator John Romero cited it as a key influence, as did Eugene Jarvis.

"It was the first fully formed videogame with real enemies, incredible audio, ever-increasing difficulty and tension with infinite play time as long as you can stay alive," Jarvis told us. "It also created the first videogame addicts and launched the worldwide videogame revolution. By allowing experts to set record scores limited only by skill, endurance and bladder capacity, *Space Invaders* also became the first esports."

Dona Bailey, who was working as an assembly language programmer for microprocessors in Cadillac engines at a GM-Delco plant in Santa Barbara, California, clearly recalls her first encounter with videogames and the impact it had not just on her but other media. "It was April 1980 and my best friend was very interested in new music," she said. "He played the first Pretenders' album constantly and it had an instrumental song called *Space Invader* on it. I didn't typically like instrumentals but I heard that one so much, I started really liking it."

One night she asked a friend what the song was about and what the title meant. "He got wildly excited and explained it was about this great arcade game called *Space Invaders*," she

remembered. "He said there was a game in a bar close to where we worked, and I should go there with him at lunch some day to check it out. We went, he put in quarters, I got killed before I could figure out what I was supposed to do but I recognised how much the game display looked like the climate control display I programmed on the car back at work, and that's how I fell in love with videogames."

Bailey ended up moving to Sunnyvale in May 1980 without a job or much of anything else, but she was soon hired at Atari where she devised and worked on the popular track-ball-controlled arcade game *Centipede*. *Space Invaders* had taught her much about gameplay and she thrived. The same was true of other developers.

"Skill, risk and strategy," affirms game developer David Perry of the lessons taught. "The feeling that each time you play, you feel you're getting better; the rewards for taking risks. *Space Invaders* was ahead of its time."

NOWHERE TO RUN

David draws attention to the fact that players could not hide the whole game. They had to keep popping out into danger or risk being exposed when the barriers were destroyed or killed if the aliens got too close. "The fact that you could attack in any order and use bases for cover





🎮 *Space Invaders* is included in the Game On exhibition at the Barbican Centre, London

🎮 *Space Invaders Get Even* appears on WiiWare

🎮 Taito releases an album called *Space Invaders 2008*

🎮 An art game *Invaders!* is included at the GH ART exhibition at the Games Convention, Leipzig

🎮 *Space Invaders* launches on iOS

🎮 *Space Invaders Infinity Gene* launches on PS3 and Xbox 360

2006

2008

2009

2010

allowed for strategy and the two most clever parts were that things sped up, forcing you to rethink your strategy of how to handle the last invaders," he says. "And that was before you saw the glorious strategy disrupter – the spaceship."

The arcade machines themselves were another disrupter. The emergence of the arcades proved crucial in getting people interested in videogames and it could be argued that gaming and *Space Invaders* may not have become so big had they not been introduced in such a way.

"The immense success of the *Space Invaders* arcade cabinet saw competitive gaming enter new and often unexpected locations for its time, such as shops and restaurants," argued Marie Foulston, curator of the V&A's Videogames: Design/Play/Disrupt Exhibition. Jason Fitzpatrick, curator and chief executive officer of the Centre For Computing History in Cambridge, agreed, "They didn't have a strong barrier to entry – players could put a coin in a machine and play without having to invest in expensive home computers or consoles. The arcades had a feel about them and an atmosphere that people enjoyed. Games were instantly social."

Even so, *Space Invaders* did land in people's homes. In 1980, Atari had grabbed an exclusive licence for the game, making it the first arcade game to be ported on to a console. It appeared on the company's VCS machine, later known as the 2600, and became a hit, helping to quadruple sales of the machine three years after it was launched.

"Probably the biggest masterstroke was cementing *Space Invaders* into people's homes by porting it to the Atari 2600," Simons said. "By bringing a half-decent version of an arcade experience onto the first truly popular home videogame console, it embedded itself into living rooms as well as arcades."

For Atari cofounder Nolan Bushnell, it was another feather in his cap. Already successful in the arcades himself thanks to *Pong*, he had pulled off a coup, even though he was initially sceptical of it. "*Space Invaders* gave me further humility on how to judge a good game," Bushnell explained. "When I first played it I didn't think much of it but clearly I was massively wrong. It made me realise that you have to be careful of quick judgments about a game – you need to play it enough to make an accurate judgment. It became one of my favourite games."

Suddenly a Japanese-made game was propelling an American-created console to great heights and *Space Invaders* began to enjoy a second wind. "It was probably the first videogame that had both dynamic and narrative development," Bushnell continued. "It had the correct balance between risk and reward."

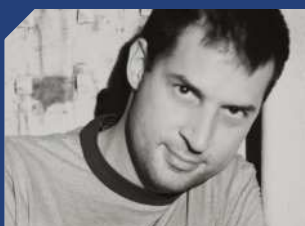
Just as with the arcade machine, the home console version proved encouraging. "It inspired a new generation of people to get into games development and coding," Mark Cutmore said. "The music and sound effects in *Space Invaders* were influential on the future of games development, showing what a background score which reacts to development within the game can do for the experience. People recognise that these developments had a huge impact and *Space Invaders* is held in high regard as a creative turning point."

It had a big effect on people such as Jenna Seiden who was eight years old when *Space Invaders* launched on the Atari 2600. She eventually became the former vice-president of content development and strategic partnerships at Microsoft Studios, and then the head of content acquisition at the gaming distribution platform Ultra. "*Space Invaders* hit all the right notes and it became iconic the moment it landed on the shelf," she said. "It combined the successful shoot and destroy mechanics of previous titles with more intense graphics, and it was an inspiration for gamers like me."

SPACE ODYSSEY

Seiden said the game became an icon because it moved the industry into one of the first examples of storytelling in videogaming. "I did love the double bullets if you held the reset button while you turned the 2600 on, and I liked getting my

David Perry
cofounded
Shiny
Entertainment.



The PlayStation
version made
knowing nods
to the original.



🕒 A new species of arachnid is named 'Taito spaceinvaders'

🕒 *Space Invaders* appears in the Adam Sandler movie *Pixels*

🕒 The *Space Invaders Frenzy* coin-op dwarfs gamers in the arcades

----- 2014 ----- 2015 ----- 2017 -----



Space Invaders Extreme used supercharged graphics.

phalanx-narrowing on, but it was truly the fact that *Space Invaders* spawned the next phase of iconic titles like *Galaga* and *Asteroids* that also resonated with the marketplace."

Space Invaders also impacted the Japanese development scene. "*Space Invaders*' success stimulated many companies in Japan to embark on game developments," highlighted Nishikado. "The rapid growth of the game industry threw up some masterpieces and developed the consumer game field from which the Famicom, or NES, was born. When the Famicom became a global hit, it was clear Japanese videogames were taking the world by storm." As for *Space Invaders*, its legacy was set in stone.

The game grossed \$2 billion in less than four years and, as Cutmore argued, "it demonstrated that the emerging entertainment industry was big enough to rival film and music". Big companies were keen to associate themselves with the game. But unlike those who worked in rival industries, Nishikado did not achieve personal fame for a few years, with publisher Taito's policy being to hide the creators.

"I don't think that I felt frustrated at the time, but I had some small sad and envious feelings when I encountered the individual names of videogame creators of other manufacturers later on in magazines," Nishikado said. "I feel happy that nowadays disclosing their individual names is quite natural and common sense."

The French street artist Invader has peppered cities across the world with depictions of the *Space Invaders* aliens that he creates out of square ceramic tiles. People also often use pseudonyms to take part in *Space Invaders* competitions (although Frank Tetro was more than happy to be named when, aged 14, he hit the headlines for achieving an incredible 110,125 points in the National Space Invaders Superbowl of 1980).

Crucially, the name *Space Invaders* has become ubiquitous and it remains on the tip of people's tongues almost 45 years after it was first unveiled in Japanese arcades. "The visual design of *Space Invaders* is a universal iconic shorthand for 'videogames,'" says Iain. "Even if only by that measure, it's hugely relevant."

MARKING 40 YEARS

How Taito and Square Enix celebrated four decades of *Space Invaders*

>> To celebrate the 40th anniversary of *Space Invaders* in 2018, Taito's parent company Square Enix planned and developed four attractions. They brought the game to life like never before, starting with the amazing *Play! Space Invaders Exhibit* in January which took place at in the Roppongi district of Tokyo, Japan.

The highlight was *Space Invaders Gigamax*, an impressively huge installation that projected the game onto the windows of a building and allowed up to ten players to enjoy the classic title against the backdrop of Tokyo. It proved to be a sight to behold, with the invaders making their way towards the city's streets as gamers sought to blast them away.

Another exhibit created by Square Enix was *Arkinvaders* which projected the game onto the floor and introduced elements of *Arkanoid*. Here, players attempted to destroy the aliens by kicking digital circles at them while trying to prevent the weapons falling off the playing field. It was energetic and fun and an artistic spin on age-old gameplay that feels fresh.

More sweat-inducing was *Noborinvaders* which



Invaders being projected on the night sky is no-brainer.

was projected against a climbing wall. As the players climbed, invaders appeared on the various boulders, meaning players had to position themselves close and reach out to touch them, thereby removing the aliens from the playing area..

Finally, there was *Bahamut Disco*, a mind-bending experience which projected the game onto a 360-degree screen. Four players picked a colour of alien and used VR controllers to swat them away as they appeared, all soundtrack to a disco beat. Since it didn't need a VR headset, its creator said it offered a new way of playing with VR hardware.



Space Invaders' simple design invites new ways to play.



The iconography of the arcade classic lends itself perfectly to an art exhibit.



WARHAMMER 40,000

In the grim darkness of the late 1980s, a tabletop game spawned a vast universe.

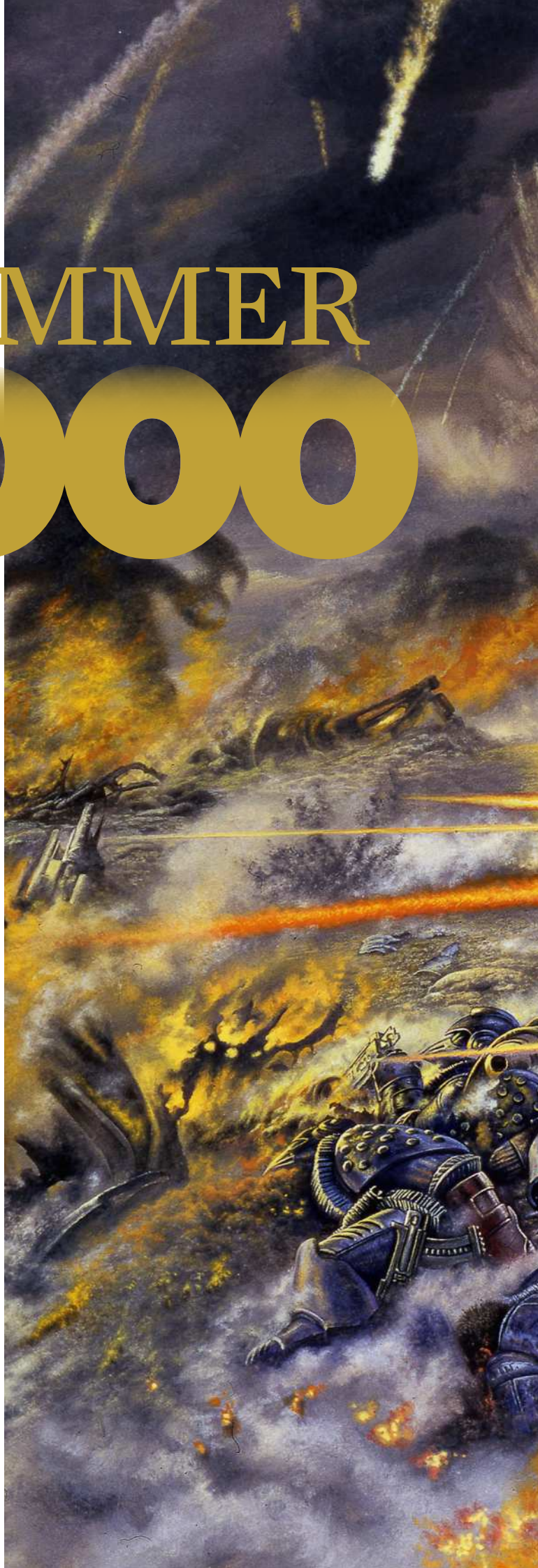
Thirty-five years on, Will Salmon heads to the Imperium of Man...



GAMING IN THE LATE 1980S AND early 1990s was not what it is today. This was a time before the widespread ubiquity of the internet, where consoles from Sega and Nintendo were popular, but still rooted in the limitations of 8-bit and 16-bit architecture. The first PlayStation was just around the corner and would change everything, but before then another sort of play held a tenacious grip on schoolyards and model clubs around the country. Kids and adults alike were busy collecting and painting armies of metal men: savage, green-skinned Orks; aloof, enigmatic Eldar; deadly alien Genestealers; and the insidious forces of Chaos. Most notable of all, in vast legions of brightly coloured armour, were the many and varied chapters of the Adeptus Astartes – the Space Marines.

Warhammer 40,000 is a phenomenon. The tabletop-based miniatures wargame turned 35 this year, but rather than fading with time, it's arguably experiencing something of a renaissance. The days of every other kid painting a Blood Angels Devastator squad or straining their eyesight trying to paint the checks on an Eldar Harlequin's trousers may have gone, but the game's universe is better known than ever before, encompassing novels, comics and, yes, videogames.

Before *Warhammer 40,000* there was *Warhammer* – “The mass combat fantasy roleplaying game,” written by Bryan Ansell, Richard Halliwell and Rick Priestley, published in 1983.







Although far from original in its setting – this was a fantasy world lashed together from bits of Tolkien, Conan, David Eddings and Terry Brooks – it still had depth and richness. And it had miniatures; lots and lots of gloriously sculpted miniatures, then cast in a child-unfriendly, please-don't-put-them-in-your-mouth alloy that included lead. It was a huge success.

A science fiction variant was launched four years later at Games Day '87, titled *Warhammer 40,000: Rogue Trader*. A young Jes Bickham was there and eagerly snapped the book up. It clearly had a big impact on him – he's now the creative writing manager for Games Workshop, which manufactures and publishes all things *Warhammer*. "There was just something deeply inventive and anarchic about it," he said. "It was really dark and a bit satirical at that time."

Indeed, *40K* – as it's known by fans and players – owes as much as it does to *2000 AD* and heavy metal as it does traditional wargames. Take the setting: a sprawling cyber-goth nightmare where compassion is an impossibility and "there is only war". Humanity is besieged on all sides by deadly aliens, corrupted from within by treacherous elements and the only chance of survival lies with the totalitarian Imperium. It's a maximalist universe where war machines stand thousands of feet tall, where there's no such thing as too big a gun, and where everything looks better with a skull on it.

"In the beginning, we were producing a bunch of figures with all sorts of wild ideas – it was very freewheeling," said another Jes – Jes Goodwin, today the company's lead miniature designer. "Gradually certain images 'stuck'. We didn't think the game would last that long – fantasy was the big thing then!"

Indeed, while the Space Marines and Eldar would eventually evolve into forces with specific and detailed mythologies, in the early days there was a certain generic 'fantasy-ness' about them, and a more direct sense of humour. Mercenaries would have names like Space-Dout Sam, the Eldar were simply "Space Elves" and the Squats were Dwarves with guns.

HEROISM AND HERESY

Rogue Trader attained a cult following but it wasn't until five years later that the game *really* broke through. Second edition *40K* was the first to come in a big boxed edition starter set, complete with two armies of competing plastic miniatures: a whopping 80 figures split into Ork



“Miniatures take time to make, so you form a bond with them”

and Space Marines factions (albeit mostly in the same fixed pose). In 1993 it was pretty much the most exciting thing you could find under your Christmas tree.

By this point, the game's lore had become more fully realised. The Marines were no longer simply genetically-enhanced super soldiers, but warrior monks, utterly devoted to an Emperor who may-or-may-not be dead, his body kept in permanent stasis and worshipped as a god. Orks were rampaging through the galaxy, and the monstrous Tyranid hive fleets (think Giger's Alien crossed with the Borg's desire to assimilate) were encroaching into human space. *Warhammer 40,000* wasn't simply a game – it was an entire universe.

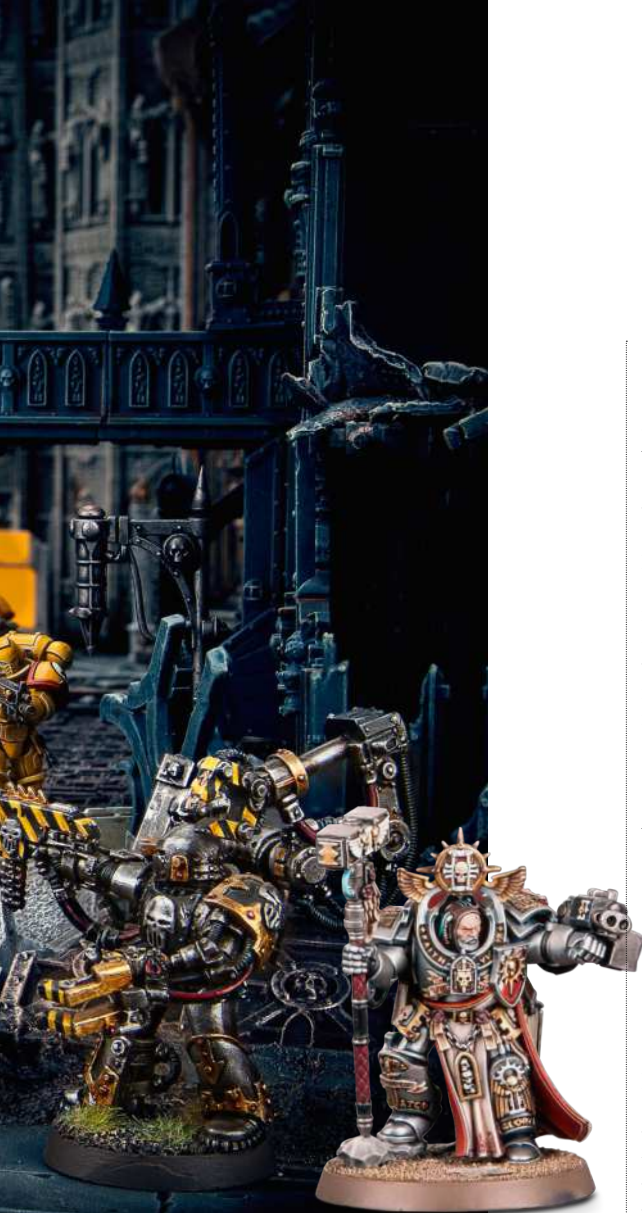
While the background (or "fluff" to some) inspired the term "grimdark" – used by fans to gently rib such comically OTT and bleak settings – there's no doubting that the *40K* universe has a genuine potency.

"Because it's lasted 30 years, we've had the chance to put together a compelling universe," said Games Workshop's senior background

writer Phil Kelly. "It's fully realised. Some of the factions are as old as the game itself and they've all grown and developed with time. When people delve into it, they get a feeling of, 'My goodness, this is vast!'"

He's right. Open up the *40K* rulebook, or one of the various army lists (Codexes to the converted) and you'll find a wealth of beautiful art and incredibly detailed fiction expanding on their histories. "Undoubtedly when you have that many factions you'll find some that resonate and speak to you," said Kelly. "People cast their allegiances, they choose their faction and think 'those are my guys.'" And because miniatures take time and effort to make and paint, players form a unique bond with their armies. "You buy them, you put them together and they're not like anyone else's. Maybe you've swapped in a different head, or painted your own colour scheme. Because you've made that investment, there's a bond."

Meanwhile, the figures were growing ever more ambitious. The lead-based models were eventually replaced by lighter white metal versions, while the company also began to experiment more with plastic. "We went from one or two-part models to multi-part kits in order to maximise the detail," said Goodwin. "That brought in the concept of modular ranges where you could mix and match elements to



make your own custom miniature. It allowed us to make larger kits and vehicles, which became a distinctive part of the 40K range.” Gone were the days of troops all having the same pose - now they were unique.

Away from the tabletop battlefield, the Games Workshop empire was also expanding. While a few 40K novels had been published in the early 1990s (the first being Ian Watson’s *Inquisitor*), the tail end of the decade saw the launch of the Black Library – a dedicated *Warhammer* fiction imprint. Over the following 20 years, it would grow and grow, delving deep into the game’s lore with books, comics (now published by Titan) and, in 2010, the entirely forgettable CGI

animated movie *Ultramarines*, with Terence Stamp and John Hurt.

But there were murmurings – and eventually fully-blown cries – of discontent from fandom. Videogames were now one of the biggest forms of entertainment on the planet. You could buy the latest PlayStation or Xbox title for £60/\$60 and be immersed in a game world immediately. By contrast, a basic 40K starter force would cost in the region of £100/\$160, not counting the requisite army books and paints, plus beer and crisps to feed your foes. It increasingly felt like the company had become an elitist, expensive model company, with the ‘Games’ part of their name dwindling in importance.

RESURGENCE

All that changed in 2015 with the arrival of *Warhammer: Age Of Sigmar*. In a risky move the dwindling *Warhammer: Fantasy Battle* was scrapped, replaced with an entirely new game system that was designed to be simpler than the original, and which threw out the established lore almost entirely. It further infuriated much of the company’s hardcore audience but, seven years on, it now seems like a genius move. *Sigmar* is faster, cheaper and far less intimidating than *Fantasy Battle*.

Such drastic measures were not required for the still popular 40K, but the company undoubtedly looked to *Sigmar* when revamping the rules for the eighth edition, released earlier this year. The new rules are easy to get to grips with, taking up just a few pages. If you can’t afford the Dark Imperium starter set there are cheaper alternatives available, or you can simply download the core rules for free and play with your existing models.

“Day one, we wanted everyone to be able to play 40K,” said Bickham. “It was a huge task because it’s a new system with new rules. It meant going back to the beginning to redo the rules for every single miniature we make.”

The game’s background has been given an overhaul, too – though this is a progression of the story, rather than a reboot. “The galaxy has been split in two by a massive warp rift – basically a tear in the fabric of the universe that’s letting all hell break loose,” said Kelly. “So the

Spin-offs

The main game isn’t the only title set in the 40K universe

The 40K universe has been expanded numerous times through spin-off games. The first, *Space Hulk*, was released in 1989 and pitted squads of Space Marine Terminators against alien Genestealers – four-armed nasties with a dash of Giger’s Xenomorph in their creative DNA. *Battlefleet Gothic* (1999) was a starship-based combat game, while Epic 40,000 was effectively 40K, but with 6mm infantry – allowing for vast squadrons of tanks, enormous Titan war machines and even worse eyesight in figure painters. Current spin-offs include the *Horus Heresy* titles set 10,000 years earlier and the gang-based *Necromunda*.



good guys are really on the back foot. It’s a time of desperation – the barbarians are not just at the gates, they’ve broken through and are flooding the castle!”

But it’s not all bad news for mankind. Alluded to in 40K lore for decades, but always as a thing of the past, some of the Space Marine Primarchs (the mighty founders of the original Marine Chapters) have returned, who Kelly describes as “demi-gods on the battlefield”. The rank-and-file Space Marines, meanwhile, have also had their first significant overhaul since the early 1990s.

35 years after *Warhammer 40,000* first blasted and stomped their way into hobbyists’ lives, it feels like Games Workshop has got its mojo back. You can imagine kids playing 40K again, not just 30-somethings with healthy bank balances, and Bickham highlighted there’s been a direct attempt in the company to re-engage with the players. “We’ve got a community website, we have external playtesters, we’re talking to our customers and listening to their feedback. It’s really exciting.”

And while the game has come a long way since the *Rogue Trader* days, some things remain reassuringly the same. The Space Marines are tough, the Eldar are shiftier and everything looks better with a skull on it.



GAMING



HALO

COMBAT EVOLVED



The very first screenshot of *Halo* ever. Looks... *Halo-y*.

BUNGIE'S **HALO** TRANSFORMED A GENRE WITH GAME MECHANICS THAT STILL RESONATE TODAY. ADAM BARNES AND DARRAN JONES REVISIT THE KEY ELEMENTS THAT MAKE IT SHINE

IT'S ASTONISHING TO THINK THAT IT HAS BEEN two long decades since we experienced Master Chief's very first adventure. Released to critical acclaim on Microsoft's Xbox, *Halo: Combat Evolved* set new standards for console shooters, introducing numerous new game mechanics and delivering an exciting world to explore, either on foot or in one of the many vehicles that were available. For many who were unaware of developer Bungie, *Halo* must have felt like a bolt of brilliance, completely out of the blue, but the DNA of Master Chief's debut adventure can be traced back to *Marathon*, a popular first-person shooter that Bungie released for the Mac in 1994.

While *Halo* was rightly praised for its excellent combat mechanics, satisfying enemy AI, tactical combat and fantastic multiplayer options on release, Bungie had actually intended it to be a very different game. Development began in 1997 and one of Bungie's first thoughts was to create a real-time strategy game with vehicular-based combat. This eventually evolved into a third-person action game before becoming the hit first-person shooter we know and love today. And let's be honest, there are a lot of reasons to love Bungie's sci-fi epic.

Rare's *GoldenEye 007* had shaken up the FPS console market on release thanks to its clever level design, progressive difficulty structure and spectacular four-player action and it became the gold standard for console first-person shooters. But if we're honest, *Halo* felt like it was in another league. Aside from its phenomenal visuals and majestic score, *Halo* introduced strategy, largely due to Master Chief only being able to carry two weapons, meaning you needed to know you had the right tools for whatever job was ahead of you. Vehicular combat played its part too, while the enemy AI (particularly on *Legendary*) made *Halo*'s combat feel light years ahead of Rare's spectacular shooter. The fact you could play the entire game cooperatively with a friend wasn't to be sniffed at either. Standout levels like *The Silent Cartographer* felt like you were really taking part in a large-scale, savage war, while the introduction of the Flood proved that Bungie still had the power to surprise you at such a late stage in the game. And then, of course, there was the sensational multiplayer which offered endless hours of entertainment and introduced many, many non-PC gamers to the importance of LAN gaming. The original *Halo* felt like a monumental event on its release and thanks to its *Anniversary* edition, released on Xbox 360 in 2011, it still stands up exceptionally well today.

Over the following pages, we'll examine everything that has made *Halo* so special, from its superb multiplayer to its fascinating range of weapons and the many sequels and spin-offs that followed in its wake.

MEET THE **HALO** VETERANS



ED FRIES
VP of games publishing,
Microsoft Game Studios



STEVE ABEYTTA
Lead
environment artist



ALEX SPENCER
Features editor,
Edge magazine



JEN TAYLOR
Voice
of Cortana

HALO'S LEGACY

Edge's Alex Spencer revisits *Halo*

What made you realise that *Halo* was special?

What I can bang on about endlessly is the visual language of *Halo*, which was instantly iconic. There's a layer of the dusty-grey aesthetics of military hardware, sure, but it's set against these locations with skies and trees and rock formations that took Bungie's home turf, the Pacific Northwest, and extrapolated it into something brilliantly alien. And how many shooters offer you vehicles that look like the opalescent shell of a beetle, and guns that fire glowing purple needles? And yes, unfortunately, the Flood too. But for a very specific generation of players, the *Halo* campaign was the equivalent of *Star Wars*' cantina sequence – a set of gorgeous toys that would live in your head well into adulthood.

Tell us about *Halo*'s most iconic mission: *The Silent Cartographer*. What made it so enjoyable?

I mean, for a start, what a name. I still think about it in my idle moments to this day. But much has been said about its structure, and for good reason. You start with this beach landing, then get to circle the island in a Warthog, working your way to its centre, and then you eventually descend beneath the ground. It's such a perfectly logical progression, the kind I can still roughly trace in my imagination. But the highlight for me has to be the moment that you encounter the Hunters. They're the game's biggest bad, and now there are two of them, in an enclosed arena. It's a brilliant escalation, a preview for what *Halo 3* would do in its famous double-Scarab sequence.

Do you think that Master Chief as a character had a hand in helping to make the game appealing?

As a character, Master Chief is – like Gordon Freeman, Doomguy, a lot of the shooter icons of old – pretty much a cipher. But he's a cipher with a very cool visual design. There's a chunky physicality to Chief's silhouette, which perhaps we can put down to the limited number of polygons he was built out of, but it's simple enough to be memorable. He's one of those few videogame characters that pretty much anyone could reliably doodle. You don't get that with 'Soap' McTavish, do you?

What has made *Halo* such a long-lasting franchise?

Honestly, the fact that so many of the subsequent games were just as good as the first. *Halo 3* landed another *Edge* 10, and I'd suggest *Reach* might have deserved one too. Those games might not have been combat evolved, exactly, but they were certainly combat bloody-well-iterated-on. In latter days, the series has faltered a little under the stewardship of 343 Industries, but the [reception of] *Halo Infinite* has shown that the fundamentals of its multiplayer are still rock solid. Development has clearly been bumpy, but fingers crossed for another *Halo* game worthy of the higher end of *Edge*'s scoring scale.



INNOVATING A GENRE

THE HISTORY OF THE FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER IS A LONG AND STORIED ONE, WITH **HALO** BEING ONE OF THE MOST IMPACTFUL TITLES IN THE GENRE. THE MODERN-DAY FPS OWES A LOT TO THE INNOVATIONS OF BUNGIE'S BEHEMOTH...

WHAT CAN YOU REALLY SAY ABOUT the innovations of *Halo: Combat Evolved*? Where do you start to dilute down the minutiae of its smart game design into a single, unifying statement of the game's historic impact on an entire genre? Even Bungie didn't set out with that impact as a goal, as it initially planned a strategy game. In truth, its many innovations are just too vast to effectively present in detail, but on the other hand, it feels – these days at least – a little like

treading old ground. You see, the problem isn't that *Halo* wasn't innovative, but rather that it has gone on to have such a long-lasting and profound impact on the way we play first-person shooters – particularly on consoles – that we might overlook a lot of Bungie's work.

"Today we take dual-stick [controls] for granted on consoles," said former VP of publishing at Microsoft Ed Fries of what he feels was *Halo's* biggest contribution to the FPS genre. "But in the year 2001, it was something

incredibly new. Many people were sceptical whether it was even possible to take a genre like the FPS, which had been developed for mouse and keyboard, and move it onto a console controller." Fries led the team behind the original Xbox and was instrumental in getting *Halo* and the Bungie team to join the Microsoft Game Studios family ahead of the console's release. Prior to that, Bungie had been a solely PC and Mac developer, and it had worked exclusively with the mouse-and-keyboard setup and likely wasn't considering a way to innovate on its FPS stablemates' tried-and-true means of input. "There's a huge amount of innovation and subtlety in the work that Bungie did to make the player feel like they are in control and can hit what they are trying to shoot at," said Fries. At the time, the most notable console FPS was still *GoldenEye* and the variations it would go on to inspire. "The thing to remember about *GoldenEye* is that it was written for a Nintendo 64 controller with a single analogue stick so it really doesn't feel like modern console first-person shooters," continued Ed. "I think *Halo* was the first game to make an FPS feel good on a console and prove that the FPS genre could be as popular on consoles as it was on PC."

The transition over from PC to console didn't just answer the immediate question of how to port over the complexities of a 'true' FPS to a



The spike-flinging Needler: iconic sci-fi design.



"Okay, who forgot to pack their spare ammo packs?"



Vehicles are fun, but explosive lasers? That's the good stuff.

“I think Halo was the first game to make an FPS feel good on a console”

controller, though. This is where the myriad innovations to the gameplay came in, with Bungie distilling down just enough of what was then the core features of an FPS to retain that depth while making it more manageable in a console space. For Alex Spencer, features editor at *Edge* magazine, it is this buffet of console-considerate improvements that made the original *Halo* worthy of the fabled *Edge* 10 review score. “One of the things we look for in an *Edge* 10 is a game that pushes the medium forward. ‘Revolutionary’, as our old review policy had it,” said Spencer. “Today, you have to squint a little to see that in *Halo*. It looks like just another console first-person shooter, right? But that’s because it invented most of the vocabulary of those games.” The most notable of these is the recharging shield, Master Chief’s primary health meter that protected him from fatal harm. There were still health packs to rely on – this was the early 2000s after all – but this was a crucial change that, decades later, has become the de facto model for FPS games, leading to war-grizzled veterans cowering behind cover just waiting for the red jelly impeding their vision to clear and all those bullet wounds to mystically restore themselves. But there were numerous other aspects too, such as the two-weapon limit that meant the strategic swapping of guns on the fly, or the dedicated grenade button for instant access to explosions. Along with its open environments, varied enemy AI and fluid access to vehicular combat, Bungie’s classic was infused with strategic combat that allowed for a more personal approach to any given challenge than anything else at the time offered. “We all moan about games with colon-suffix subtitles,” added Spencer, “but *Halo* was one of the few titles to ever get it right: *Combat Evolved*? Yeah, you could say that.”

A CHAT WITH CORTANA

Jen Taylor talks Halo, Master Chief and finding the voice of Cortana

What direction were you given for the character of Cortana while working on *Halo: Combat Evolved*?

The things that they said to me was that, ‘You’re this man’s lifeline, you’re sort of the girl next door, there’s no flirting, it’s not that kind of relationship. You’re the entity really helping [Master Chief] get through the game. We don’t ever want you to sound like you’re annoyed with him, you’re working together, you’re a team.’

Did you enjoy your time working on *Halo*, and when did you realise that it had become a huge success?

I had a great time recording it because they were just such a fun group of people who were so excited about the game, but I didn’t know how well *Halo* had done until they called me back and said, ‘Do you wanna do *Halo 2*?’ So I thought, ‘I guess people liked *Halo*!’ I feel like it gets bigger every time, because it’s been around so long. The lore gets deeper, it becomes a bigger thing. Probably *Halo 2* was when I realised that people are really excited about this and I think this is when I first saw a little Cortana figurine and thought, ‘Oh, there’s a toy!’

How does it feel to be the voice of such an iconic videogame character?

It’s just a gift to get to play a character such as this for such an extended period of time and to check in with Cortana, if you

will, for really intense periods... and then to just step away from her. Each game I felt like I got to know her better because I would have a year or two or three in between, and I would have to reacquaint myself with my little friend. I adore this character, she surprises me. It was an interesting thing to play the genesis and the growth of her more human side, it was interesting to play someone discovering that.

What’s been your favourite moment playing Cortana?

That’s a long list of things! You know, I think so much of this, for me – and for Steve [Downes, the voice of Master Chief], we have talked about this – is going out and meeting the people that this game has affected. That is the really big takeaway from this. I have people come up to me and say, ‘This game saved my life, this game helped me to process stuff that I was not able to, this game made me feel strong, this game gave me a community when I didn’t have one.’ Those are the things that I really remember. I imagine there are people who will read this and think that this is silly, but I promise you that I have so many people come up to me and thank me for just being a part of it because it has really given them light in a place that was dark, and that is what really means something to me.





AUGMENTING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

MOST WILL AGREE THE RICH SETTING OF **HALO** IS ONE OF THE KEY FACTORS THAT MADE IT SURVIVE THE TEST OF TIME, BUT IT WAS THE GAME'S AI THAT LED TO IT HAVING A BELIEVABLE WORLD...

IT'S NOT THE SEXIEST TOPIC TO BRING up whenever lavishing praise on a game, but there's something about being a retro-gaming fan that makes AI a truly compelling concept.

And while *Halo* wasn't populating entire worlds with its artificial intelligence, the practical uses that were implemented not only added believability to *Halo*'s world but a greater depth of strategy, too. This AI was enhanced by unique animations that let enemies fake dodges to make you miss them, roll away from your grenades or use specific abilities to evade a melee attack and follow up with a counter of their own. It all combined to create a truly intelligent set of enemies. The AI was smart, and that made *Halo*'s higher difficulties tough to beat.



The AI varied itself depending on situations, too, with the most obvious example being the Grunts, the weakest Covenant forces you'll find in the game. Catch one of these little fellas out on his lonesome and it'll waddle away in fear, arms a-flailing. Stumble upon a small group, however, and they'll collaborate, finding ways to expose you or force you to take action. Should you find an Elite among them, however, then you'll find this stronger unit almost acting like a leader of sorts, which gave the combat against the Covenant a genuine feeling of one man against an army. But of course, you weren't one man, and the AI was also working among the human Marines, too, and both sides of the army were always looking to solve problems on the battlefield in their own personally driven ways. Even the Flood would hide around corners and wait for opportune moments to strike. It's what made the skirmishes feel realistic, especially when humans faced off against the Covenant since the Chief could sit back and watch the events unfold. You might not 'see' AI in shooters, but you can certainly feel it in *Halo*.

And, in fact, players did feel it. When moving to *Halo 3*, Bungie switched away from the dynamic AI of *Halo* and *Halo 2* and instead went

for deterministic AI processing, something that every *Halo* game since has followed up on. What this means is that the enemy AI takes its actions based on the input from the player, meaning if you always do X then the AI will always do Y. It's less flashy than something like *Halo: Combat Evolved*'s dynamic AI, but it's easier to develop and arguably there's less 'value' in smart opponents than there is in sparing the processing power needed to operate them to instead crank up the visuals. Which is what happened with *Halo 3*, and players noticed: you'll still see people asking why the modern *Halo* games don't feel as impressive when it comes to the enemy AI.

The sad truth is that of all the ways that *Halo: Combat Evolved* has gone on to impact the shooter genre, its impressive AI was the only thing that flew under the radar. Over the years, impressive AI became a hard marketing concept and as a result few shooters since have bothered to implement the same sort of depth to its AI, which is a shame considering the advances that have been made in the areas of processing power, game design and even artificial intelligence itself. At least when the genre is ready for some truly memorable battles again, *Halo: Combat Evolved* will still be there to inspire.

ROGUE'S GALLERY

The critters and combatants Master Chief faces



UNGGOY

Named 'Grunts' by humans, the Unggoy are your everyday cannon fodder: fairly ineffective combatants, not especially hardy but a good distraction in larger numbers. These are arguably the most iconic enemy in the *Halo*-verse thanks to their cowardly nature; they'll try to flee in tears when outnumbered.



SANGHEILI

The core foundation of the Covenant army, the Elites as they are known, come in a broad spectrum of combat styles. Some have energy shields, some can be invisible, and some – the most intimidating of all – can decimate you with their neon energy swords. Slay one and claim their super-cool blade for yourself.



KIG-YAR

The Jackals are pretty one-note when it comes to their combat style, since each of these warriors come with a large, round shield that is impervious to United Nations Space Command armaments and regular energy pistol blasts. They're not too tough, but they can be tricky to take down without a proper strategy.



MGALEKGOLO

These Hunters are the most fearsome units of the Covenant army throughout *Halo: Combat Evolved* since their Fuel Rod Gun is capable of doling out the damage while their heavy armour makes them a beast to bring down. They'll typically appear in pairs, too, doubling the anguish they can cause.



Looks like
car insurance
negotiations
broke down.

WEAPONS TRAINING

You'll need to find armaments in the field, so you better know how to use them.

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

What makes a Spartan so formidable?

BOOSTED JUMP

The enhanced jump of the Spartan suit is capable of heights that would put LeBron James to shame.

REINFORCED BONES

It's what helps them survive high falls without breaking their legs.

HEADS-UP DISPLAY

Alongside the Chief's superhuman vision, the Spartan suit can also provide crucial status info and objectives.

ENERGY SHIELD

This keeps the Spartan protected from incoming gunfire, and automatically recharges after depletion.

SUPER STRENGTH

How else could you explain the ease with which Master Chief can flip a Warthog?



THE FLOOD (INFECTION FORM)

The ultimate aim of the Flood is to find new hosts through which they can leverage its abilities, and that's what these swarming little buggers are about. They're pretty weak, popping with the slightest amount of pressure from your assault rifle – but that can cause a chain reaction of mini explosions.



THE FLOOD (COMBAT FORM)

Once a suitable host has been found, the Flood will reanimate its body and use it as its main form of offence. These are typically melee-focused combatants and not to be trifled with, since they'll take a lot of damage before their biomass becomes useless. The strength of a Combat Form is dictated by its host.



THE FLOOD (CARRIER FORM)

More passive than the other Flood forms, the Carrier Form is designed to give a space for Infection Forms to gestate. They'll explode if destroyed or within close range, which not only causes its internal critters to burst into action looking for a new host but can even create a chain reaction of explosions with other nearby Carriers.





DESIGNING HALO

IN MANY WAYS CONSIDERED TO BE GAMING'S STAR WARS, THE **HALO** FRANCHISE HAS GONE ON TO BUILD A WHOLE UNIVERSE'S WORTH OF ALL-ENCOMPASSING LORE. BUT IT ALL BEGAN IN 2552 CE...

LOOKING OVER THESE SCREENSHOTS, it might strike you that there's nothing particularly standout about *Halo's* visual direction. In hindsight, and with years of advancements in 3D design, we've become somewhat jaded about the storytelling of an environment. The environment of Installation 04 looks much like the pine-strewn environment of the Pacific Northwest from where *Halo* was developed, and perhaps that's intentional. But it's still an alien setting, and somehow while playing, it feels alien, too. "Most of that comes from the Halo ring," explained Steve Abeyta, one of the many artists that worked on *Halo: Combat Evolved* whose work primarily covered animation and environment design. "When you're outside in the game, wherever you are you can see the ringworld and that adds an alien feel to the game." The whole purpose was to create something that felt open and exciting, something that the player could feel was just waiting to be explored. That was where the Pacific Northwest influences came from, with Marcus Lehto – the game's art director – once telling *Retro Gamer* that the intent was to put players "into what is equivalent to a giant national park and allowing the player to free roam and explore this giant natural wonderland that was the terrains of *Halo*".

And while the UNSC was always designed to be something familiar to our own modern-day worlds, only extrapolated 100 years into the future, the alien races of the Covenant, the Flood or the ancient and extinct Forerunners each had their own design philosophies that were each subtle yet unique. The Covenant was more



That Halo ring in the distance is an otherworldly wonder.

overtly 'alien', with its sci-fi spaceships and plasma blasting rifles. The Forerunners were more mechanical, most noticeable in the likes of Guilty Spark 343 but also in the buildings of the Halo ring itself and the various unexplained symbols and sigils that decorated its interiors. Then there is the Flood, hideous fungal-like creatures that were at odds with the clean, hard edges of the sci-fi world – visually representing the threat that they presented to the order and exactness of all of the universe's civilised races.

Then there's the Master Chief, whose enigmatic and arguably unexciting appearance has gone on to become one of videogames' most iconic characters. "Master Chief never struck me as a visually iconic character," said Abeyta, "but I always thought the design was elegant and memorable and sophisticated, there's nothing cheesy about his design." Abeyta added that Master Chief is almost an extension of the UNSC's design aesthetic, that John-117 is as much a weapon as those he uses. "There's the Warthog, right? Which looks like this really well-designed, industrial piece of equipment, and Master Chief seems like he's in the same



Grunts are group fighters. They won't fight you solo.

family. Like, in the *Halo* world, the same company designed and manufactured this [vehicle] and this suit, so it's more about form follows function – he looks [more] like a piece of equipment than a bespoke character."

Game worlds were already becoming more detailed and intricate, particularly on PC, with the likes of *Deus Ex* and *Half-Life* proving that rich and detailed worlds to explore could add a much greater fidelity and immersion to the game. But *Halo's* approach to its visual design encapsulated a sense of worldbuilding that out-scaled anything that came before it. There was a subtlety to everything, and not just in the various details and design decisions, but also in the way the tech was pushed to new areas. Abeyta spoke of how *Halo's* project lead had once been set a challenge to come up with something cool, and through that, "Jason just sat there over the weekend and we came in on Monday and he was like, 'Hey, check this out, physics-flag!' which was mind-blowing at the time because you hadn't seen that. And that made it into the game." Team members would just come up with ideas or be given the opportunity to create some and just go to town on it, putting in the hours to add something new and exciting – however small it may be – to add just a little more detail to the world of *Halo*. "There are dozens of these things that just got put in because people were so passionate about the game," said Abeyta. "And so when you add them all up, that's why there's so much detail and love that went into the game."



"Dropships! We're gonna need a bigger gun..."



"I don't remember this being in the Highway Code."

THE WEAPONS OF HALO

Turn the tide with this deadly arsenal



M6D PISTOL

Chances are high you rarely used this sidearm beyond the initial moments aboard the Pillar Of Autumn. It's not that the classic pistol is a bad weapon, it's just not going to replace anything else that you'll easily find lying around.



MA5B ASSAULT RIFLE

Basically the bread-and-butter weaponry for Master Chief and the UNSC Marines. It'll be your go-to weapon for the majority of *Halo*, though it is best used as a close-range weapon due to its weaker per-bullet damage and wide spread.



TYPE-25 PLASMA PISTOL

This is the earliest Covenant weapon you'll find. It's particularly handy to have as a secondary weapon since an overcharged plasma pistol will knock out any Covenant shield, at which point a blast from the assault rifle will finish the job.



M90 ASSAULT SHOTGUN

What's an FPS without a handy shotgun? As you might expect, it's a heavy-damage, close-range weapon that can gun down almost any foe if you're close enough for the full spread to land. You'll first find this when you also find the Flood.



TYPE-25 PLASMA RIFLE

The Covenant's equivalent to the UNSC's automatic weapons, this mid-range rifle might not have as much utility as the plasma pistol but it still packs a punch and can stun enemies in place. Watch out for it overheating, which can happen very quickly.



TYPE-33 NEEDLER

Arguably the most iconic gun of the series, the Needler's unique ammunition will home in on a target and, after a short delay, will explode after embedding into its target. Skewer a target with seven needles or more to make a bigger boom.



SRS99C-S2 AM SNIPER RIFLE

As the most powerful weapon in the game, at least in terms of damage, a skilled marksman will likely find that the sniper rifle will help in most gunfights, at least before they get flanked by the enemy AI. The only issue is the Flood, where the bullet simply flies through their body.



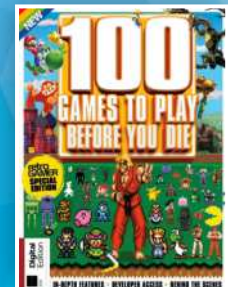
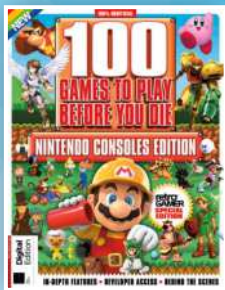
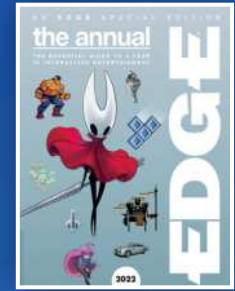
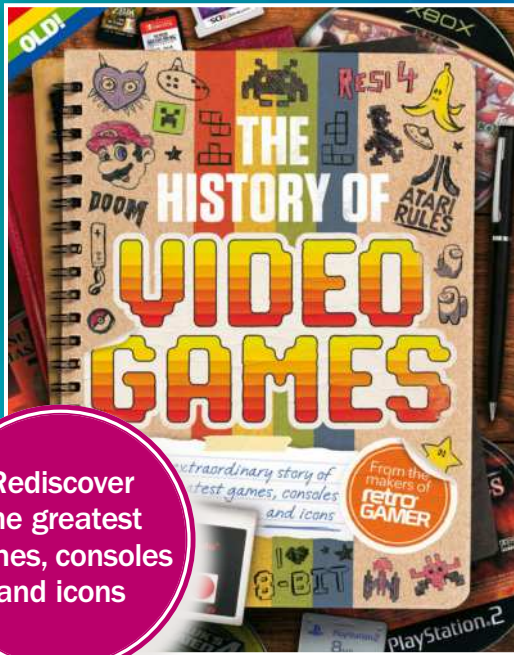
M41 SPNKR

What better way to down those pesky Covenant Wraiths or Hunters than with rocket-propelled explosives? As you might expect, ammunition for this is limited so you'll need to pick your targets wisely, but it's a lot of fun all the same – especially in multiplayer.



FUEL ROD GUN

While this devastating gadget could only be used in multiplayer in the PC and Mac versions of *Halo: Combat Evolved*, it's actually the weapon used by Hunters in the campaign. It fires an arcing ball of superheated fuel, which generates a massive explosion when it hits.



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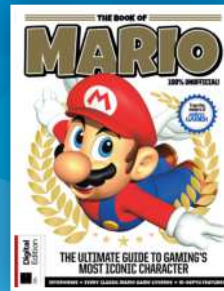
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